

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



December 2013

Vol. 118, No. 12

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THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON *Cessation of Bondage*

To injure another creates bondage and hides the truth. Negative virtues are not enough; we have to conquer Maya, and then she will follow us. We only deserve things when they cease to bind us. When the bondage ceases, really and truly, all things come to us. Only those who want nothing are masters of nature.

Take refuge in some soul who has already broken his bondage, and in time he will free you through his mercy. Higher still is to take refuge in the Lord (Ishvara), but it is the most difficult; only once in a century can one be found who has really done it. Feel nothing, know nothing, do nothing, have nothing, give up all to God, and say utterly, 'Thy will be done'. We only dream this bondage. Wake up and let it go. Take refuge in God, only so can we cross the desert of Maya.

It is our privilege to be allowed to be charitable, for only so can we grow. Let the giver kneel down and give thanks, let the receiver stand up and permit. When we cease to see evil, the world must end for us, since to rid us of that mistake is its only object. To think there is any imperfection creates it. Thoughts of strength and perfection alone can cure it. Do what good you can, some evil will inhere in it; but do all without regard to personal result, give up all results to the Lord, then neither good nor evil will affect you.



Doing work is not religion, but work done rightly leads to freedom. In reality all pity is darkness, because whom to pity? Can you pity God? And is there anything else? Thank God for giving you this world as a moral gymnasium to help your development, but never imagine you can help the world. Be grateful to him who curses you, for he gives you a mirror to show what cursing is, also a chance to practise self-restraint; so bless him and be glad. Without exercise, power cannot come out; without the mirror, we cannot see ourselves.

Unchaste imagination is as bad as unchaste action. Controlled desire leads to the highest result. Transform the sexual energy into spiritual energy, but do not emasculate, because that is throwing away the power. The stronger this force, the more can be done with it. Only a powerful current of water can do hydraulic mining.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 7.68–9.



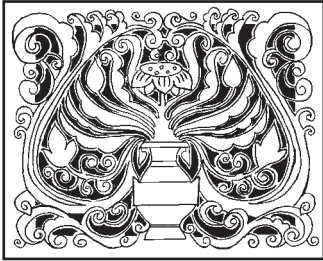
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A Film on Swami Vivekananda

Duration: 125 minutes, DVD Format: PAL

A narrative of the extraordinary life of Swami Vivekananda, in his own words

Based on his autobiographical remarks, 'Swami Vivekananda Ki Atmakatha' is a feature film. It is an attempt to recreate the life and times of one of the greatest visionaries through his own words. It begins with the young Swami swimming across the turbulent Indian Ocean, climbing the rock in the middle of the ocean to meditate. In solitude, he realizes his life's mission—to rouse the religious consciousness of the people and to expound his plan for the uplift of the downtrodden masses of India by the application of the principles of Practical Vedanta. Thus begins one of the most adventurous journeys in Indian history.

This is the Hindi version of the English Film 'Vivekananda by Vivekananda' which was released in January 2012 and the same was well received by devotees, admirers of Swamiji, and general public. Tamil version of the Film was also released last month under the title *Vivekanandarai Patri Vivekanandar*. The DVD (PAL) is available for sale on Chennai Math's online Store at the link:

<http://www.chennaiath.org/istore/product/swami-vivekananda-ki-atmakatha-hindi-movie-dvd/>.

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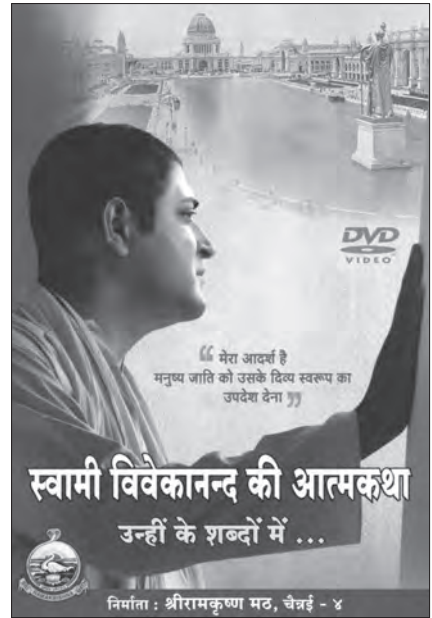
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Concept, Script, Screenplay and Direction: Karthik Saragur.

DVD Price: ₹ 150/- + Postage: ₹ 50/- for single copy.



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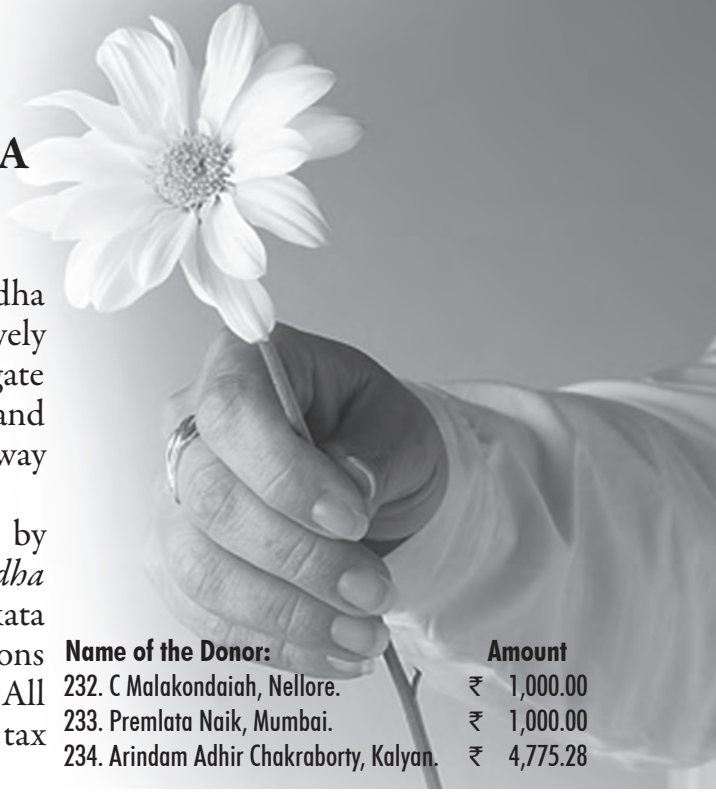
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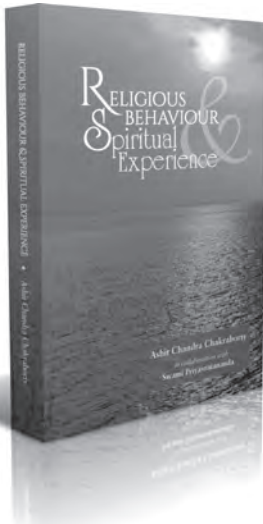
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—Asit Chandra Chakraborty
in collaboration with
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Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

Extracting One's Essence

December 2013

Vol. 118, No. 12

घृतमिव पयसि निगूढं भूते भूते वसति विज्ञानम् ।
सततं मन्थयितव्यं मनसा मन्थानभूतेन ॥

Like butter hidden in milk, pure Consciousness resides in every being. It ought to be constantly churned out by the churning-rod of the mind.

(Amritabindu Upanishad, 20)

तिलेषु तैलं दधिनीव सर्पिरापः स्रोतःस्वरणीषु चाग्निः ।
एवमात्माऽऽत्मनि गृह्यतेऽसौ सत्येनैनं तपसा योऽनुपश्यति ॥

As oil is in the sesame seed, butter in curd, water in flowing waves, and fire (in wood), so is the Atman in oneself. It is to be discovered by one who searches for it through truth and tapasya.

(Brahma Upanishad, 17)

यथैव बिम्बं मृदयोपलिप्तं तेजोमयं भ्राजते तत् सुधान्तम् ।
तद्वाऽऽत्मतत्त्वं प्रसमीक्ष्य देही एकः कृतार्थो भवते वीतशोकः ।

Just as a disc covered with mud shines as full of light when washed well, (similarly) the embodied being, seeing the reality that the Atman is, becomes non-dual, self-fulfilled, and free from sorrow.

(Shvetashvatara Upanishad, 2.14)

येनावृतं खं च दिवं महिं च येनादित्यस्तपति तेजसा भ्राजसा च ।
यमन्तः समुद्रे कवयो वयन्ति यदक्षरे परमे प्रजाः ।

He by whom the space between heaven and earth, as well as heaven and earth, are enveloped; he because of whom the sun burns with heat and gives light; and he whom the sages bind in the space within their hearts (through meditation), in that Imperishable one all creatures abide.

(Mahanarayana Upanishad, 1.3)

THIS MONTH

Who Speaks for You? Most of us live unseen and unheard, but if we know the secret of existence, we shall speak the language of life and the universe and shall be heard.



As part of an interfaith lecture series 'Tribute to Swami Vivekananda', at the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of North Texas, Dallas, **Yoga Therapy of Compassion** was presented by Pravrajika Brahmaprana, a senior nun of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood.

For more than a thousand years Acharya Shankara has greatly influenced Indian philosophy and religion. Dr V Vasanthakumari, Associate Professor, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, writes about **Acharya Shankara and Indian Culture**.

In today's globalized world corporations need a new type of leadership. In **Inner Structures of Management Leaders** Dr Uday Kumar Halder, Principal, Swami Vivekananda Institute of Management and Computer Science, Kolkata, elaborates on this subject.

The Atman and the Five Sheaths, by N K Divya, research scholar at the Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, explains how the Self is apparently trapped in the body and how it can become free.



The puzzle of consciousness has defied humankind throughout history. In **Neurobiology, Quantum Mechanics, and Consciousness**, Dr Saibal

Gupta, a renowned cardiothoracic surgeon and cultural historian from Kolkata, writes about how modern science is trying to understand the nature of consciousness.



In the last instalment of **Compassion in the Diamond Sutra and the 'Sermon on the Mount'**, Bob Stewart presents Jesus's teachings on compassion. This lecture was part of an interfaith meeting at the Ramakrishna Vedanta

Society of North Texas, Dallas.

In the fifteenth part of **Eternal Words**, Swami Adbhutananda speaks on good actions and their capacity to lead us to God. The swami's words are translated from *Sat Katha*, published by Udbodhan Office, Kolkata.

This month's instalment of **Svarajya Siddhi: Attaining Self-dominion** by the eighteenth century Gangadharendra Saraswati, fifteenth pontiff of Kanchi Kamakoti Pitham, Kanchipuram, further refutes the Nyaya and Vaisheshika theories of creation.

EDITORIAL

Who Speaks for You?

IN TODAY'S WORLD no one has the time or energy to really hear each other any more. Most people are living their little lives as if it were a bubble. Moreover, in the process we are becoming deaf to ourselves and to nature around us. Everyone wants to be heard, but no one wants to hear others. No one wants to hear the innumerable complaints, generally exaggerated, of pain, frustration, sorrow, anguish, sickness, failed love, and so forth. However, there are genuine voices of hunger, poverty, and illness that mostly go unheard because they are disturbing and uncomfortable. The voices of power, bad leadership, lust, lies, greed, and so on drill their way into our consciousness making us restless and angry, but at the same time we turn away from the voices that speak to us of injustice, abuse, human trafficking, slavery, exploitation, and other evils because it is upsetting. This growing deafness and the despair of people of not being heard can be rectified: if you want to be heard, you have to hear others carefully. Of course, there are a few people who hear their inner voices and reach out to people in distress. They are the real leaders of society, because their voices represent and embody other voices.

Many are not heard even at home. When one is young, parents and teachers speak for you. As you grow older, maybe you wrongly learn that the priests and saints intercede for you. In a globalized economic world, the rich and powerful say they know what you want, but actually they only want your money. Even

in a democracy, where citizens have a voice, that voice is too feeble to be heard in the babel of other voices. Politicians and leaders who are supposed to represent the people who voted for them do not speak up for what people want. In countries where there is no democracy, tyrants tell you what is good for you. Either way, the state often comes and tells you to stop shouting. You think you have a voice, an attitude, and an opinion, but your voice is lost in the morass of others' voices, attitudes, and opinions.

In recent years people have been bypassing many of the huge old political, administrative, social, and financial institutions, and even the biased media, with the help of technology. Technology is empowering and liberating people and has enabled them to speak for themselves. We connect with others through social media sites that are becoming more strident and assertive. But even here, if there is no real constructive social dimension in the message, one's voice fades into nothingness. The other side of technology engages people in frivolity and meanness, which spreads like wildfire in the cyber world. Then nature's laws step in and rubbish the whole exercise. Whatever has universal value and voice is helped on by nature; whatever is small and selfish is cast into oblivion.

Humankind has the unique peculiarity of speaking one thing while meaning something else. We also change our opinions so quickly that we speak contradictory things and say different things to different people. If a political or social goal has been reached by a group, it is seen

that many dissenting voices rise again, break the unity, and create confusion. There is no lasting solution or peace when there is dissension, because we are never satisfied. We become united for a while only to fragment again.

Among the more than seven billion human voices, all clamouring to be heard, except for a few genuine human rights organizations, hardly anybody really speaks for you. And in this clamour, the voices of the past, other inhabitants of the earth—millions of species and beings—and the environment have mingled their voices.

Are people totally voiceless, sidelined, and ignored? We have to consider that there are other representative voices that one rarely hears audibly. These are the silent voices of your ancestry, race, history, culture, religion, and language. On the individual level one's character and achievements, which are in most part due to others, speak loudly and distinctly. Listening deep down one can hear the firing of billions of neurons in the brain, which translate into chatter and thoughts in the mind. All these neurons from different brains, human and non-human, create a vast neural network and produce a global mind. Go still deeper to find that the chromosomes and the genes they contain are chemically talking, while creating all life through the power of evolution. These genes also speak of the amazing unity of all life. Moreover, the genes have commandeered billions of bacterial life to inhabit each body. These first life forms also speak through their silent workings.

The whole of nature, insentient and sentient, speaks to us. Similarly, the Milky Way, including billions of other galaxies, speaks of the infinite extension of the universe. Our global voices are mingled with all these voices. One can also include the voices of all the gods and other celestial beings. Who speaks for whom? We all speak the one language of the universe!

This language of the universe is unheard because of the individual voices of selfishness and vice. You must be able to listen to the still small inner voice, the voice of conscience, which tells you that unselfishness is more paying, compassion is more paying, and that living a life of smallness is living miserably. This mighty voice of the universe is speaking to us of our own infinitude, which is voiced in an ancient prayer of the Rig Veda: 'Assemble, speak together; let your minds be all of one accord, as ancient gods unanimous sit down to their appointed share. The place is common, common the assembly, common the mind, so be your thought united. A common purpose do I lay before you, and worship with your general oblation. One and the same be your resolve, and be your minds of one accord. United be the thought of all so that all may happily agree.'

Your life depends on the whole, and until you speak the language of life and the universe, the universe and life will not bother hearing you; if you can speak the language of life, humanity, and the world, you will be heard, for you will then represent the whole. This is the goal of Vedanta, which declares that the one Reality has become many through maya. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* puts this idea forcefully: 'The worlds reject one who knows them as different from the Atman. The gods reject one who knows them as different from the Atman. Beings reject one who knows them as different from the Atman. All reject one who knows all as different from the Atman. ... These worlds, these gods, these beings, and this All are the Atman.' When you understand this secret, the power of the whole universe will flow through your thoughts, words, and deeds. Your little voice will go and in its stead will arise the voice of infinity. Then you will truly speak and be heard.



Yoga Therapy of Compassion

Pravrajika Brahma-prana

NEVER BEFORE in the developed world have people been so stressed, so depressed, so unhappy. According to the World Health Organization, depression is among the leading causes of disability worldwide.¹ The Regus Group reports that in major global economies stress levels have risen in the workplace to the point where six in ten workers experience increased workplace stress—with China reporting the highest rise (86%) in workplace stress (*ibid.*). In the US the treatment for stress reportedly costs 10,000 dollars per worker, which is equivalent to 300 billion dollars in the US economy per year.²

Furthermore, in October 2011 the National Center for Health Statistics reported that the rate of antidepressant use in the US among teens and adults—people from 12 and older—increased by almost 400% between 1988–94 and 2005–8.³ It is especially heartbreaking to note that in the US, in recent years, one in twelve teenagers have attempted suicide.⁴

Effective stress management in the workplace is a recognized worldwide need today, reflected by weakened global economies, job insecurity, and a hectic family life. Swami Prabhavananda, the founding head of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, observed the fast pace of the 1960s' Western lifestyle and commented: 'Americans are living many lifetimes in one life.'⁵

Even at the turn of the twentieth century, Swami Vivekananda must have foreseen the seeds of a swelling, fast-paced city life during his first visit to the West. At the 1893 Chicago

World's Fair the swami saw first-hand the West's spellbinding inventions of a scientific, industrial, and technological revolution. Now, well into the second decade of the twenty-first century, humankind is undergoing a global digital revolution wherein even India's hill people and remote village dwellers are toting cell phones! Digital technology, like a genie just let out of the jar, has gobbled up huge sectors of the once beautiful Indian cities such as Bengaluru and left them hopelessly congested with IT technology start-up companies. At the same time it is miraculously connecting people throughout the world, just as it is phenomenally rewiring our brains at a breakneck speed.

Neuroscientific research cautions that humans simply cannot assimilate today's online and digital information glut. In a recent article issued from the Center for Brain Health, entitled 'Is Your Brain Being Wired by Technology?', Dr Sandra Bond Chapman reported:

Research shows we are exposed to three times more information today as compared to four decades ago. This information overload leads to more multitasking and forces us to push our brain to do things it was not built to do. Technology is allowing us, pushing us to do more as we toggle back and forth between projects and switch between using our personal computer and cell phone endlessly throughout the day.

This high-performance demand to smoothly switch back and forth fatigues the frontal lobe, slows efficiency, and decreases performance. Multitasking contributes to the death of brain cells, takes a dramatic toll on mental processing and causes increased errors. Multitasking also

leads to the build up of cortisol, the stress hormone, and stress reduces the immune system's first line of defense.⁶

The fact is: we have become so mesmerized by our own virtual pastimes and digital communications that we are fast replacing what we once enjoyed as *real* company and *real* conversations in *real* time. Adam Gazzaley, neuroscientist at the University of California, San Francisco, warns: 'We are exposing our brains to an environment and asking them to do things we weren't necessarily evolved to do. We know already there are consequences.'⁷ And sometimes the consequences are deadly.

Over a hundred years ago Swami Vivekananda encapsulated our age-old human condition: 'We are caught, though we came to catch. We came to enjoy; we are being enjoyed. We came to rule; we are being ruled. We came to work; we are being worked. ... We are being worked upon by other minds, and we are always struggling to work on other minds. We want to enjoy the pleasures of life; and they eat into our vitals. We want to get everything from nature, but we find in the long run that nature takes everything from us—depletes us and casts us aside.'⁸

Open the Door and Look around

What is the solution? Desperately we now seek the solitude of nature or meditation gurus to calm our minds, but to no permanent avail. Perhaps a holistic solution to today's problems lies in a telling response Swami Vivekananda gave to a young man from the Bengal Theosophical Society who approached the swami with the question: 'I sit in meditation, shutting the door of my room, and closing my eyes as long as I can; but I cannot find peace of mind. Can you show me the way?'

'My boy,' Vivekananda replied, 'if you take my word, you will first of all have to open the door

of your room and look around instead of closing your eyes.' He continued:

There are hundreds of poor and helpless people in the neighbourhood of your house; them you have to serve to the best of your ability. He who is ill and has no one to look after him, for him you will have to get medicine and diet and nurse him; he who has nothing to eat, you will have to feed him; he who is ignorant, you will have to teach him, well-educated as you are. My advice to you is that, if you want peace of mind, you have to serve others in this way as well as you can.⁹

Contemporary psychological studies reveal evidence that social service is actually a universal tonic for happiness. In the field of psychology Alfred Adler, the founder of individual psychology, postulated a holistic outlook to mental health that advocates social service as a prescription for well-being. He posited that there are two kinds of people: one, who feel purposeful and useful in life and are thus content, and the other who feel purposeless or useless, which leads to discouragement and depression. According to Adler, 'human beings were not merely collection of traits or parts, but rather were active agents; engaged with others, creating and interpreting life within specific communities and cultures.'¹⁰ In this connection Dinah Daniels, Adlerian student counsellor at the Southern Methodist University, explained Alfred Adler's antidote to depression during an interdisciplinary university conference on 'Social Service as a Universal Rx for Well-being': 'Adlerian psychology counsels individuals to learn to look outside themselves and develop social and community relationships in the form of service.'¹¹

New clinical research supports Adler's prescription of social service as an antidote to depression. In a July 2013 article, 'How Service Can Save Us' in *Time* magazine, a war veterans'

community service rehabilitation program, called Mission Continues, reported that 86% of returning veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress who were subsequently enrolled in their program stated that it provided them with 'a positive life-changing experience'.¹² In support of those who recover from depression by engaging in social service, AARP The Magazine recently reported this simple fact: 'Several studies have shown that givers tend to be happier people.'¹³ Jorge Moll, head of D'or Institute for Research and Education in Brazil, goes a step further by providing research reports that in fact 'altruism stimulates the same pleasure centers in the brain as sugar and cocaine do' (ibid.).

Generosity of spirit, whether in serving others or generating compassion for others in meditation, can now be scientifically measured in the brain. At the University of Wisconsin, neuroscientist Richard Davidson hooked up Matthieu Ricard, renowned Tibetan monk and molecular geneticist, to 256 brain sensors. During Ricard's meditation on compassion the brain scans showed a level of gamma waves linked to consciousness, attention, learning, and memory never reported before in the neuroscience literature.¹⁴ The research showed excessive activity in his brain's left prefrontal cortex compared to its right counterpart, giving him an abnormally large capacity for happiness and a reduced propensity towards negativity (ibid.). Such research substantiates that meditation on compassion can alter the brain and improve one's peace of mind and happiness. Neuroplasticity, or cortical re-mapping, refers to this ability of the human brain to change as a result of one's own internal experience. As Ricard explained: 'It's a wonderful area of research because it shows that meditation is not just blissing out under a mango tree but it completely changes your brain and therefore changes what you are.'¹⁵

If meditation on compassion can produce happiness, it follows that so must selfless service, karma yoga, which is a meditation on compassion *in action*. In the case of acts of compassion the brain also physically remaps itself to mirror happiness, as case studies of recovering

'White-robed Kannon, Bodhisattva of Compassion',
by Kano Motonobu (c.16th cent.)



post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) war veterans can further verify. The age-old Vedanta philosophy and practice explains the metaphysical *why* and *how*.

The Source of Compassion

Let us first ask ourselves, what is compassion? What comprises it? What are the starting mechanism and apparatus that sustain it? By just *saying* it, can we *be* it? With regard to this last question, the answer is yes and no. Words themselves paint mental pictures and can hence act on the brain. We find that words such as ‘compassion’, ‘love’, ‘friends’ soothe nerves and generate a palpable feeling of well-being, whereas ‘war’, ‘terrorism’, ‘crime’ reportedly increase heart rate and blood pressure. Yes, words can act as catalysts for compassion invoking a compassionate mood. But how many of us can use words alone to measure up to the Dalai Lama’s definition of compassion? ‘Remember,’ the Dalai Lama asserted, ‘that the best relationship is one in which your love for each other exceeds your need for each other.’¹⁶ In this connection Swami Vivekananda once explained: ‘Through the power of love the senses become finer and higher. The perfect love is very rare in human relation, for human love is almost always interdependent and mutual.’¹⁷

Vedanta postulates that human love, when purified, can act as the initial framework to support an edifice of higher love. Why? Because all love is actually a shadow of divine love, as Swami Vivekananda exhorted: ‘Love and ask nothing; love and look for nothing further. Love and forget all the “isms”. ... The very idea of God is love. Seeing a cat loving her kittens, stand and pray. God has become manifest there; literally believe this. ... For we can see God everywhere’ (7.29). The *why* lies within the microcosm and macrocosm—within each being and at the metaphysical level of the universe itself.

Religion says that there is a heart to the universe. The divine incarnation comes from the heart of God, the loving, grace-filled part of God; not the God of a cosmic order, or the maintainer of justice, of the creator or destroyer of the universe, or the God who is the giver of the fruits of karma, but the God of love incarnate. Divine love is Vedanta’s philosophical basis for compassion, which is rooted in and synonymous with Satchidananda. *Sat* is the Existence through which everything exists—as Christ said: ‘Before Abraham was, I am.’¹⁸ *Chit* is the Consciousness that contains all knowledge—as St Paul explained: ‘In Him we live, move, and have our being.’¹⁹ And *ananda* is Bliss—the ‘Peace of God, which passeth all understanding.’²⁰

The Upanishads tell us that the cosmic creation is bliss-filled, an expression of divine love itself: ‘In Bliss springs this universe, in Bliss dwells this universe, towards Bliss dissolves this universe.’²¹ Swami Sarvagatananda, former head of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Boston, once elaborated on the integral connectedness of absolute Consciousness and Bliss. ‘*Chit* is not just Consciousness,’ he explained, ‘but *loving* Consciousness. A seer who has that experience sees light, and that light is Loving Consciousness.’²² This is compassion in its highest sense; wisdom and compassion go together.

To experience this *ananda*, or loving consciousness and infinite compassion, we need only uncover the mine of bliss that lies within each of us and realize the Atman, which is one with Brahman. *How?* By deepening and expanding our human love, which is the shadow of divine love. Swami Vivekananda expressed this truth beautifully when he explained: ‘Who can attract a soul really? Only He! Do you think dead matter can truly attract the soul? It never did, and never will. When you see a man going after a beautiful face, do you think that it is the

handful of arranged material molecules which really attract the man? Not at all. Behind those material particles there must be and is the play of divine influence and divine love.²³

As Vedanta reveals, our love for *something* or *someone* is actually our unknowing attraction to the Atman. Therefore, to make this revelation a spiritual practice, the sage Yajnavalkya taught his wife Maitreyi how to actualize divine love by unfolding the truth that lies within human relationships. 'It is not for the sake of the husband my beloved,' the sage taught, 'that the husband is dear, but for the sake of the Self.' He continued:

It is not for the sake of the wife, my beloved, that the wife is dear, but for the sake of the Self.

It is not for the sake of the children, my beloved, that the children are dear, but for the sake of the Self. ...

It is not for the sake of the gods, my beloved, that the gods are worshiped, but for the sake of the Self.

It is not for the sake of the creatures, my beloved, that the creatures are dear, but for the sake of the Self.²⁴

How can we generate this feeling of divine love? If we start with compassion, we find that its meaning 'feeling with' comes not from the outside but from deep inside ourselves. The Latin word *com + pati* translates as 'co-suffering', which indicates the emotional capacity for empathy and sympathy, both part of love itself, because we cannot feel compassion without love. Compassion, then, is the source of a feeling of interconnectedness with all, which when expanded reaches the pinnacle of oneness. Yajnavalkya taught Maitreyi to love others 'for the sake of the Self' residing within all. This oneness is the foundation for the highest philosophy as well as for the dharmic laws of society and ethics of personhood, that means to be a true human being. As Swami Vivekananda stated: 'Jnana,

Bhakti, and Karma—all come to one point. The highest ideal is eternal and entire self-abnegation, where there is no "I", but all is "Thou"; and whether he is conscious or unconscious of it, Karma-Yoga leads man to that end. ... It is the basis of all morality.²⁵

It follows then that our estrangement from compassion or from the ability to 'love our neighbour as our self', comes from our universal misconception of the sense of *other*.

The four *mahavakyas* in the Upanishads dispel this misconception and reclaim our unity of existence: '*Tat-tvam-asi*; That thou art'—thou art the Self, one with Brahman; '*Ayam-atma brahma*; this Self is Brahman'; '*Prajnanam brahma*; pure Consciousness is Brahman'; and '*Aham brahmasmi*; I am Brahman.' Perhaps a fifth *mahavakya* could be 'God is love'.²⁶ because as the *Isha Upanishad* reveals: 'He who sees all beings in the Atman and the Atman in all beings, feels no hatred by virtue of that (realization).'²⁷ This is the Atman—God immanent—which is one with Brahman—God transcendent. The gift of compassion is, then, already ours; we need only open it.

(To be concluded)

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Guanshiyin, which means 'observing the sounds (or cries) of the world', is the bodhisattva associated with compassion as venerated by East Asian Buddhists, usually as a female

Acharya Shankara and Indian Culture

Dr V Vasanthakumari

SPIRITUAL LEADERS HAVE periodically appeared to preserve and further India's ancient culture. One of the foremost was Acharya Shankara (788–820), who revealed the essence of the Vedas and propounded the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta. He was born to very pious parents in Kalady, Kerala, and passed away when he was thirty-two at Kedarnath in the Himalayas. Even as a little child Shankara displayed exceptional intelligence and character. When he was just about eight years old, he took sannyasa and wandered all over India. This young sannyasin exuded such divinity, wisdom, purity, and compassion that he was considered an avatara of Shiva. Shankara—which means he who brings blessings—worked tirelessly in reforming the Sanatana Dharma. There is no doubt that he established Advaita Vedanta as the crest-jewel of Indian philosophy, but he also preached a comprehensive way of religious life.

Acharya Shankara established monasteries and monastic rules and also organized the *dashanami sampradaya*, ten orders of sannyasins. He re-invoked deities in many neglected temples, removed many religious and social superstitions, and formulated the essentials of formal worship, which is followed to this day. His brief life was full of ceaseless activity; he travelled and debated with other philosophers and largely cleansed society of the religious corruption brought on by the decline of Buddhism. Acharya Shankara's *bhashyas*, commentaries, on the *prasthanatraya*, three fundamental scriptures—Upanishads, *Brahma Sutra*, and Bhagavadgita—are the basis of modern Hinduism. He is called Bhagavan

Bhashyakara because these *bhashyas* are of incomparable literary beauty. He also wrote many *prakarana granthas*, primers on Advaita philosophy, and numerous *stotras*, hymns, to gods and goddesses. Swami Vivekananda once had a vision of an old rishi chanting Vedic hymns on the banks of the Indus in a distinctive style. 'The Swami believed that through this vision he had recovered the musical cadences of the early Aryans. He also found some remarkable similarity to these cadences in the poetry of Shankaracharya.'¹

Interpretation of the Upanishads

The Upanishads had been neglected by some early thinkers who excoriated them as mere poetry. The followers of the *karma-kanda* accepted the Upanishads as a handmaid of their favourite Vedic ritualism. Some others, who seemed to receive them gladly, proved to be very deceptive custodians, as they obstinately interpreted the Upanishads to suit their own purposes. The Upanishads went through a long period of frustrated and vegetative existence as religion and spirituality waned. Speaking of those times Swami Vivekananda says:

Again materialism came to the fore, taking the form of licence with the higher classes and superstition with the lower. Then Shankaracharya arose and once more revived the Vedanta philosophy. He made it a rationalistic philosophy. In the Upanishads the arguments are often very obscure. By Buddha the moral side of the philosophy was laid stress upon, and by Shankaracharya, the intellectual side. He worked out, rationalised, and placed before men the wonderful coherent system of Advaita.²

Madhva Vidyaranya, in his *Shankara Digvijaya*, explains the glory of Shankara's works:

His works are indeed like a bunch of luscious banana fruits—their meanings, the hunger-appeasing capacity; their implications, the attractive flavour; and their sweetness of diction, the delicious juice. Even a single fruit of a verse from that bunch of his writings is enough to give the highest delight and satisfaction to wise men and aspirants. Possessed, as they are, of matchless beauty of form like a bouquet of jasmine flowers, pregnant with meanings like a newly blossomed lotus full of nectar, and

carrying the aroma of sanctity like the fragrance of the flowers of the celestial tree, his works will provide thrills of deep joy and spiritual inspiration to all who approach it.³

A philosopher states: 'The Ācārya's sententious style of writing, his tersely aphoristic expressions and his intrepid arguments—all this and all these make his writings a wonder for all time, not only in the sphere of Advaita Vedanta but also in the vast fields of the world's literature for such is the rare gift of the right word he possessed together with the acutest intellect.'⁴

Though different *bhashyas* were written by different Acharyas prior to Shankara, sincere people found them confusing and partial. By bringing his tremendous power of intellectuality in his great works, Acharya Shankara laid down the yardstick of sacred texts' interpretation. Later commentators, even those who did not agree with Advaita Vedanta, followed his style of reasoning.

One of Advaita Vedanta's stupendous arguments is the one that deals with the identity of the jiva and Brahman. Shankara emphasized this identity through the light of the *mahavakyas*, great dicta, of the Upanishads. This emphasis was based on the supreme realization he had on hearing these sayings. As a young boy Shankara approached and worshipped his guru Govindacharya, who, being highly pleased, imparted to young Shankara the knowledge of Brahman through a *mahavakya*. Later Acharya Shankara established the four principal *mathas*, monasteries, to carry on the tradition of Advaita Vedanta on the basis of these *mahavakyas*. Through this he thus gave a cultural identity to India. Jyotir-math, or Joshimath, in the north had '*Ayam-atma brahma*, this Atman is Brahman';⁵

Shankara requesting his mother's permission for taking sannyasa when a crocodile is about to drag him by his leg



Govardhana-math in the east had '*Prajnanam brahma*; Consciousness is Brahman';⁶ Sharada-math in the west had '*Tat-tvam-asi*; thou are That';⁷ Shringeri-math in the south had '*Aham brahmasmi*; I am Brahman'.⁸ Along with the *mahavakyas* he also formulated the rules for initiation into sannyasa, brahmacharya, and the studies of sacred texts. The four *mahavakyas*, which form the kernel of the entire Upanishadic literature, were enhanced in the eyes of the people by Acharya Shankara's superb commentaries on them.

Cultural Impact

Acharya Shankara's *bhashyas* on the ten main Upanishads have a remarkable place in Indian cultural and spiritual heritage. These excellent insights became significant not only among pundits and monks who studied these works but percolated to other sectors of society. It helped orient social life in accordance with the spiritual reality taught in Upanishadic literature. The mantra in the *Katha Upanishad*, 'Arise, awake, and learn by approaching the excellent ones',⁹ frequently quoted by Swami Vivekananda, is commented upon by Shankara as: 'You creatures, who are sleeping in ignorance that has no beginning, arise, turn towards the knowledge of the Self; awake—put an end to the sleep of ignorance which is terrible by nature and is the seed of all evil.'¹⁰

Because the Atman is extremely subtle, and the path of knowledge leading to it is like walking on the sharpened edge of a razor, Acharya Shankara says: 'Through meditation the conviction of the Self's reality is obtained in direct experience. When hearing, reflection, and meditation are combined in a student, then alone is the unitive Knowledge of Brahman realized; it is not realized through hearing and reflection alone.'¹¹

The statement: '*Satyameva jayate nanritam*; Truth alone wins not untruth'¹² is explained by Shankara in this way: 'It is a familiar fact in the world that an untruthful man is defeated by a truthful one, but not contrariwise. Therefore, truth is proved to be a powerful discipline. Besides, from the scriptures also it is known that truth is a superior discipline.'¹³ The commentary on '*Satyam vada dharmam chara*; speak the Truth, practise righteousness'¹⁴ runs as follows: 'Speak the Truth; *satyam* is that which accords with what is grasped through valid means of knowledge and is fit to be uttered; that thing *vada*, (you) speak. Similarly, *dharmam cara*, practise righteousness. Inasmuch as truth etc. are specifically mentioned, the word *dharma* (righteousness) is a generic term for all that is to be practised.'¹⁵ These words were said by a teacher to a student who had completed his studies in the ancient *guru-kula* system, in which Upanishadic teachings were part of the general curriculum. The student would then enter the life of a householder and try to embody that knowledge. This is how Upanishadic teachings reached almost all segments of India's ancient society.

Other Upanishadic statements, which are included in Indian traditional values and worship, are: '*Matridevo bhava pitridevo bhava acharyadevo bhava atithidevo bhava*; let your mother be a goddess unto you, let your father be a god unto you, let your teacher be a god unto you, let your guest be a god unto you.'¹⁶ The Upanishad further teaches that 'the works that are not blameworthy are to be resorted to, not the others. Those actions of ours that are commendable are to be followed by you, not the others' (ibid.).

On the mantra '*asato ma sad-gamaya tamaso ma jyotir-gamaya mrityor-ma amritam gamaya*; from evil lead me to good, from darkness lead me to light, from death lead me to immortality'¹⁷ Acharya Shankara makes the following comment:



'Srimad Guru Adi Shankaracharya', by Raja Ravi Varma (1904)

The meaning of the Mantras is hidden. So the Brāhmaṇa itself explains them: *When the Mantra says, 'From evil lead me to good,'* what is the meaning? *'Evil' means death*, i.e. our natural actions and thoughts; *'evil'*, because they degrade us very much; *and 'good'*, i.e. actions and thoughts as they are regulated by the scriptures, means *immortality*, because they lead to it. Therefore the meaning is, *'From evil actions and ignorance lead me to actions and thoughts that are regulated by the scriptures, i.e. help me to identify myself with those things that lead to divinity.'*¹⁸

Swami Vivekananda says: 'By trying to force people into narrow limits you degrade them into animals and unthinking masses. You kill their moral life. What is now wanted is a combination of the greatest heart with the greatest intellectuality, of infinite love with infinite knowledge. ... We want harmony not one-sided development. And it is possible to have the intellect of a Shankara

with the heart of a Buddha. I hope we shall all struggle to attain to that blessed combination.'¹⁹

Every culture in the world that has grown around spirituality has resisted destruction because its values are based on the imperishable foundation of the Self. By restructuring India's spiritual values Acharya Shankara has ensured its long continuity. And as long as these values remain and are made practical, his contribution will remain as one of the greatest humanity has ever seen.



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Inner Structures of Management Leaders

Dr Uday Kumar Haldar

LEADERS LEAVE THEIR MARK by doing something of lasting good for humankind. It is obvious that there are different types of leaders in the world. The first type appears with sudden energy during social crises or natural disasters, only to fade away after circumstances change. The second type is like a parent or teacher who becomes ordinary once again as children grow or teachers retire. The third type is the national leader or statesman who can sway many people. The fourth type is the spiritual leader of humankind, who leads millions of people for thousands of years.

Selflessness and vision form the core of outstanding leaders. Two other qualities remain at the periphery: knowledge and character. Knowledge handles people and oneself; character brings courage to decide, will-power, persistence, and initiative. Above all, at the very centre is the firm belief in oneself.

Bad leaders among parents, teachers, village heads, business executives, and national lawmakers can waste a lot of time and resources, arrest growth, and lead people astray. This is the reason why character is so important in a leader. But character without knowledge limits a leader's potential, and knowledge without character makes one indecisive. Furthermore, character and knowledge cannot elevate a person unless one is selfless. Thus the components of a successful leader are knowledge, character, and selflessness. Selflessness is the fountainhead of all that is noble, pure, and honest. Having a vision or an ideology also helps in becoming selfless. This is a universal truth: the higher the ideal, the higher

is the need for selflessness and the potential of becoming an effective leader.

Developing Young Leaders

In ethics, values are indicative of the degree of importance we give to determining what action is best to perform. Values represent an individual's convictions and contain judgemental elements. They deal with conduct and a meaningful life. Values are learnt from different sources at different stages of life. Culture also plays a big role regarding what people value. Values are not static but relative and keep changing as a person grows. There are, however, universal values such as love, truth, unselfishness, self-sacrifice, and so on, which form the core of all relative values. Values truly make a person, and we judge people by the values they hold. In other words, a person is what his or her values are.

Young leaders need to appreciate the complementary relationship between values and skills. Learning and practising values facilitates the development of a holistic perspective towards life. It also makes us correctly understand human nature. These perspectives form the basis of moral living, deriving a work-life balance and ensuring achievement and happiness. Such an enriched ethical life, lived anywhere, enriches others. Values rejuvenate one and act as catalysts for helping others. Swami Vivekananda realized that modern societies were passing through tremendous crises, which were altering people's sense of existence while making life mechanical. These crises can be avoided if people possess strong values.

Teachers and superiors are required to be psychologically closer to students in order to remove the barriers to the transference of knowledge and information. A person who will be a leader is marked by a high degree of energy. This energy is of two kinds. The first is the energy of yoga, of vision, of calmness, and of spirituality. This is personified in the Mahabharata War by Sri Krishna, who did not fight but gave sage advice to Arjuna. The second is the energy of intense and efficient action, like the heroic Pandava. This unique energy represents the combination of contemplation and action, vision and implementation, and leads to total success.

To make an organization effective, in the sporadically changing business environment, it is important to develop leadership skills of young managers. Just as wet clay easily takes a form, so also the inculcation of values in young managers is comparatively easier. The money spent in training and development should be treated as an investment and not as an expenditure. Training has great implications for developing leadership skills and competency. The consideration of leadership styles vis-à-vis the emotional make-up of the leader is important. Each leader reacts differently to different circumstances. Assertiveness, which is an indispensable quality of a leader, should be contiguous with talents, which can be applied to organizational needs. Creativity and innovation are essential for coping with rapid economic changes. Each leader in an organization must be trained and encouraged to work with teams to make the best use of collective intelligence, talents, and skills. Empowering leaders and employees reduces attrition and increases productivity. Leaders should be made accountable for everything, which brings in responsibility.

Young leaders should always be open to learning and improving. Swami Vivekananda says: 'Education is the manifestation of the

perfection already in man.' India and the world need young leaders imbued with a sense of ethics and values. This is the paradigm of leadership in today's environment.

A bad leader is egotistical; a good leader is marked by humility, flexibility, and creativity. These qualities are essential because leadership requirements in present-day societies are vastly different from those of the past. Though a leader must be tenacious, he or she should also be a good executive able to take fast decisions.

Leadership Styles and Skills

Managers are organizational leaders who are required to bring a variety of leadership styles in order to achieve organizational goals. The contemporary leadership styles are classified as follows: transactional, transformational, charismatic, value-based, servant, spiritual, boundary-spanning or teamwork, and 'Level 5' leadership.

Transactional leaders concentrate on changes, innovations, apply discretion, and possess entrepreneurial zeal. This brand of leadership is a behavioural process capable of being learned and managed.

Transformational leaders recognize the need to change when necessary, create a new vision, and institutionalize the change.

Charismatic leaders generate loyalty, dedication, commitment, and emotional involvement. They can distil complex ideas into simple messages to inspire the followers.

Value-based leaders foresee the direction and speed of changes and rely heavily on their voluntary relationship with the work and workforce. They prefer not to use authority and exercise power for accomplishing tasks, but have the ability to make workers automatically do what is required of them.

Servant leaders treat their role as a developer, an enabler, and a supporter of team members.

They achieve power on the basis of their ideals of service, which helps team members develop their potential and deliver their best.

Spiritual leaders possess an inner beauty, lay emphasis on vision, altruism, love, hope, faith, and contribute to effective performance. Such leaders are the need of the age. They are motivating, inspiring, and engage a critical mass of committed and capable people whose concerted efforts would smoothly lead to business success. Spiritual leaders create vision and value congruence across the empowered team and foster high levels of organizational commitment and productivity.

Boundary-spanning leaders are not limited to performing entirely within one's group but links and functions with two or more groups. They are loyal within all the groups with which they interact.

'Level 5' leaders are executives who build enduring greatness through a paradoxical combination of personal humility and professional will and energy.

There are also other leadership styles like the coercive, which focus on the desire to achieve, initiate, and control; the authoritative, which brings self-confidence and acts as a catalyst for change; the affiliative, standing upon empathy, relations, and good communication; the democratic, which collaborates with team leaders through effective communication; the pace-setting, based on conscientiousness, that is, having initiative and drive to achieve; the coaching, which entails developing others and having empathy and self-awareness.

Leaders must have communication skills, including the quality of listening to others. Leaders should neither be passive nor aggressive but assertive. They must possess relevant technical competency and skills of setting goals objectively. The ten discrete skills for empathetic listening are: attending, reiterating, reflecting, interpreting,

synthesizing, probing, providing feedback, supporting, verifying perception, and being quiet.

Furthermore, in order to develop listening skills one has to be careful about not being pushed into accepting something without thinking or projecting one's own thoughts and ideas on the team. Respecting others' experience, credentials, thoughts, and viewpoints is important. Interpreting the importance of the roles, perspectives, or responsibilities of others is good, while assuming they are the same as one's own is bad. Cultivating the habit of listening, but not as a critic, is preferable, for one has to understand others in order to know their strengths and weaknesses before putting them to constructive use.

Apart from these basic skills leaders need more vital skills generally termed as advanced skills, which are delegation, managing conflict, persuasiveness, negotiation, problem-solving attitude, technical competency, and goal setting.

Delegation • Means transferring authority from one organizational level to another—assigning authority to junior colleagues—allowing them to make decisions that save time. Delegation is basically a four-step process: allocation of duties to subordinates, delegation of authority, assignment of responsibilities, and creation of accountability.

The principal purposes of delegation are to develop juniors, inculcate leadership skills, and enable them to make decisions with the objective to fill in the leadership pipeline. Juniors can consider all inputs meticulously so that the quality of decision improves. It is needless to mention that subordinates are energized through delegation, which in turn enhances their commitment. A junior, on receiving authority, feels that he or she is responsible and boldly accepts the accountability. Furthermore, the relationship between the seniors who have delegated and the juniors who have received the authority is enhanced. In

addition, delegation frees the senior to utilize the time in doing creative activities.

There are, however, some determinants of delegation. The organizational culture is a powerful influencer of delegation. Tolerance for risk, support for employees, and a high degree of autonomy, system of working, extent of decentralization, are a few organizational characteristics in which managers feel comfortable to delegate tasks. But in risk-averse situations, non-supportive and high-control managers hesitate to delegate. In such an atmosphere juniors also hesitate to accept higher responsibilities.

Managing Conflict • Intrapersonal or interpersonal conflicts are part and parcel of organizational life. Conflict does not develop suddenly. It begins when an individual perceives that another is making efforts to frustrate him or her. To manage conflicts the leader may impose a solution, choose a diffusion strategy, smooth out the problem, or appeal to the team goal. While imposing a solution the leader should study the antecedent conditions, finalize a solution, and impose it on the conflicting members. The conflict diffusion strategy attempts to keep the conflict in abeyance, while the emotions of both the parties are allowed to simmer down. The smoothing effect has been found to be successful where the conflicting members have some similarities. In this technique the leader may highlight similarities between the members. This enables both the parties to realize that they are not basically different from each other in regard to their viewpoints, perception, and psychology. Appealing to the organizational goals pacifies the conflicting parties.

Different experts have given different taxonomies like the conflict avoidance strategy, conflict diffusion strategy, conflict containment strategy, and conflict confrontation strategy. A leader needs the skill to identify the strategy suitable to a particular situation. While handling

conflicts one must also keep in mind certain points such as welcoming differences, finding something positive in every divergent view, reacting assertively and positively, using empathy and positive feedback, confronting problems, and negotiating solutions together.

Persuasiveness • Refers to positive manipulation, mainly face-to-face, in order to induce and stimulate others to take action that helps the party achieve a goal. Persuasion means influencing, though it differs from authority and power. Persuasion does not encroach on others' areas of interest as it preserves people's freedom. At times, when authority will not work, persuasion often can. Persuasion needs credibility, logical reasoning, and emotional support.

Negotiation • Implies compromise, conciliation, and cooperation. It is the process in which two parties exchange goods, services, or ideas leading to a contractual agreement. Negotiation occurs when someone else has what you want and you are prepared to bargain for it and vice versa. Experts emphasize the utmost need for creating a right atmosphere to make the negotiation effective. A negotiation process might have three possible outcomes: breakdown in talks, acceptable compromise, and achieving ideal outcomes for which the negotiation was organized. Even if the opening position is carefully planned, the negotiations can follow the planned as well as unplanned route. If the negotiations follow the planned route, an ideal outcome is achieved; if negotiations follow an unplanned route, then it may lead to a long-winded route wasting time. It can even move through a dangerous route with a lot of arguments ending with a breakdown of negotiations. On the other hand, a long-winded route, with a lot of wasted time, may lead to an acceptable compromise and an ideal outcome. Negotiation skills can be learnt and sharpened over the years.


Problem-solving Attitude • Problem-solving emphasizes finding out a mutually satisfactory solution. The solution must reconcile and integrate the needs of both the parties working together. The most critical ingredients in successful problem-solving attitudes, as summarized by Clayton Alderfer, involve the following points: The definition of the problem should be a joint effort based on shared fact-findings rather than on the biased perceptions of the individual groups; the problems should be specific and not abstract; the points of initial agreement and also the differences in the goals and benefits of both the parties should be identified.

Discussions between the groups should consist of specific but non-evaluative comments. Any question may be asked for clarification of information, but without humiliating the opponent. Groups should work together in developing alternative solutions. Each group may present a range of solutions. Solutions should be evaluated objectively in terms of 'quality' and 'acceptability'. In some cases the solution may maximize joint benefits without favouring any party. To make the solution equitable some ground is to be found to provide special benefits to the other party. All agreements on separate issues are to be considered tentatively until all the issues are dealt with. The issues may all be interrelated.

Technical Competency • Leaders need a variety of competencies to achieve goals, of which technical competency is essential. This competency helps them in direct interactions such as communicating and building personal networks and relationships with others. In fact, leadership competency comprises skills and behaviours concerned with building teams and getting results through them. The competencies related to analysing issues, generating alternatives and selecting the best, considering financial positions, thinking strategically, and making decisions fall into the

category of business skills. Technical competency refers to knowledge about systems, processes, procedures or methods, and techniques for conducting a specialized activity as done by engineers, doctors, musicians, players, accountants, and other professionals. This competency also includes the ability to select and use equipment, a procedure, standing instructions, techniques, and knowledge.

Goal Setting • This is necessary for oneself, for a team member, or for the team as a whole, which needs experience, maturity, and pragmatism. If the goals are specific and the roles clear and unambiguous, members can perform better. Specific goals lead to higher performance. Each goal must be split into its elements and enough time should be allotted for their achievement. The completion of each element must be closely monitored. Consider the objective of productivity enhancement; to achieve this objective one is first required to consider the product range and logically segregate it. Consider a particular group of products, estimate the level to which one can enhance the output or reduce the resources required. One has to take into account all constraints one might encounter. The time one estimates to achieve an element or work package must be lesser than that of the objective. This will enable one to initiate action if any element takes more time. In order to monitor the progress one has to set the goal in measurable terms.

Swami Vivekananda was a born leader. His leadership qualities were evident even as a child. Sri Ramakrishna made him become the leader of a band of monks destined to change the world of thought and religion. He said that only a leader that leads from the front and is the first to sacrifice himself or herself is a real leader. Besides, he said that it is important that the leader should be impersonal and free from jealousy. And above all, we must remember the common adage that 'prosperity follows a leader like a slave'. 

The Atman and the Five Sheaths

N K Divya

THE WORD *VEDA* COMES from the root *vid*, to know. The concluding portions of the Vedas are called Upanishads or Vedanta. Vedic literature conveys, in a poetic way, a wide spectrum of metaphysical knowledge. At the most sublime end of the spectrum is Advaita Vedanta, which discusses the nature of the *jagat*, universe; *jivas*, living beings; and Brahman. The *Muktika Upanishad* states: ‘*Tilashu tailavat-veda vedantah supratishthitah*; as oil is well established in the sesame seeds, so is Vedanta in the Vedas.’¹ Advaita Vedanta, as systematized by Acharya Shankara, is a comprehensive science of spirituality, universally realizable and open to rational investigation.

The most important challenge in Advaita Vedanta is to understand the relationship between the Atman and Brahman. A true perception of this relationship can be acquired only by removing the veil of ignorance caused by the *upadhis*, limiting adjuncts, created by the inscrutable *maya*. The *upadhis* manifest as the *pancha-koshas*, five sheaths, which hide the real nature of the Atman. The realization of the Atman removes all afflictions, brings eternal knowledge, and eradicates the ego, lust, anger, attachment, hatred, and the like. When the *upadhis* are removed, the distinction between knowledge, knower, and known is dissolved and only the Atman shines as the supreme Existence. According to Advaita Vedanta, the realization of non-duality is the true knowledge of the Atman, or Brahman. Acharya Shankara says: ‘*Brahma satyam jaganmithya jivo brahmaiva naparah*; Brahman is real, the world is unreal, the *jiva* is non-different from Brahman.’²

The Atman

The Upanishads declare that perfection is within each and every *jiva*. This perfection has to become manifest in oneself. The method is by removing *ajnana*, ignorance, through *jnana*, knowledge. *Jnana* is knowledge that is not derivative, partial, and subject to any qualifications; it is original, complete, unlimited, and true. The Atman is the ultimate universal Existence: ‘*Ayam-atma brahma*; this Atman is Brahman.’³ Other Upanishads declare: ‘This Atman is the ruler of all beings and the king of all beings. Just as all the spokes are fixed in the nave and the felloe of a chariot-wheel, so are all beings, all gods, all worlds, all organs, and all these (individual) selves fixed in this Atman.’⁴ It is supreme bliss, light, love, boundless consciousness, and knowledge. It is not in time, but time arises from it; it is not in space, as space also is created from it. ‘The Atman, which is subtler than the subtle and greater than the great, is lodged in the heart of (every) creature. A desireless person sees that glory of the Atman through the serenity of the organs and (thereby) becomes free from sorrow.’⁵ ‘This is the Ishvara of all; this one is omniscient; this is the internal ruler; this one is the source of all; this one is verily the place of origin and dissolution of all beings.’⁶

Over and over the glory of the Atman is described from various angles in the Upanishads. As oil is hidden in a sesame seed, butter in yogurt, fire in wood, so does the Atman reside in oneself in its fullness. It is to be discovered by one who searches for it through truth and

austerity. 'The intelligent person gives up happiness and sorrow by developing concentration of mind on the Atman and thereby meditating on the old deity who is inscrutable, lodged inaccessible, located in the intellect, and seated in the midst of misery (the organs).'⁷

The knowledge of the Atman is eternally existent and available to everyone. All the efforts of sadhakas, in the form of assiduous meditation and intense devotion, are directed towards the removal of *avidya*, ignorance. And as soon as the veil of ignorance is lifted, the self-luminous Atman shines forth. This is the state of enlightenment or moksha, freedom.

The Pancha-koshas

According to Vedanta, the Atman inside the body is apparently conditioned by the *pancha-koshas*, five sheaths or vestures. The word *kosha* means 'sheath' or 'covering'. Like a scabbard that covers a sword, the *pancha-koshas* form a series of layers, as it were, one over the other. The *annamaya-kosha*, food sheath is the outermost; inside it is the *pranamaya-kosha*, sheath of *prana* or life-force; inside this sheath is the *manomaya-kosha*, sheath of mind; then comes the *vijñanamaya-kosha*, sheath of intelligence; and finally the *anandamaya-kosha*, sheath of bliss. The *anandamaya-kosha* is subtler and more pervasive than all the others and is the cause of the *vijñanamaya-kosha*; the *vijñanamaya-kosha* is, in turn, subtler and more pervasive than the following three and is the cause of the *manomaya-kosha*; and so on successively.

Each sheath interacts with the others, and since they all are under the law of cause and effect, they are ultimately unreal. The Atman, enveloped by these *pancha-koshas*, is beyond all *desha*, space, *kala*, time, and *nimitta*, causation. The creation of these *pancha-koshas* is the work of maya, which has the power to hide the reality

by covering it and projecting something else. This projection is like an illusion which is taken for real and which binds us.

All these sheaths that condition the Atman are called the non-Atman. These sheaths become the *upadhis* of the Atman that completely limit its knowledge. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* teaches the process of peeling off one layer, sheath, after another.⁸ As we peel off layer after layer, we come closer and closer to the Atman. One has to carefully separate the Atman from the non-Atman. 'One should unerringly separate him (the Purusha) from one's body, like a stalk from the *munja* grass. One should know him as pure and immortal' (2.3.16).

The *pancha-koshas* are connected to the three bodies—gross, subtle, and causal—of the jiva. The sheath of food is identified with the *sthula-sharira*, gross body, which is subject to birth and death. The sheaths of *prana*, mind, and intellect, constitute the *sukshma-sharira*, subtle body, which is the nucleus for the birth of another gross body and is associated with the jiva throughout its transmigratory existence. This subtle body consists of seventeen factors: the five sensory organs, the five motor organs, the five *pranas*, the mind, and intelligence. The *karana-sharira*, causal body, is made up of the *anandamaya-kosha*.

From the relative or empirical point, there are three entities called Ishvara, jiva, and jagat; from the absolute standpoint, there is only Brahman-Atman, which is '*ekameva-advitiyam*; one only without a second'.⁹ The pluralism we experience, from where we start our philosophical enquiry, is not the final Truth. The one Reality appears to be plural due to *avidya*. In Brahman there is absolutely no differentiation: 'There is no diversity here whatsoever. He who sees as though there is difference here, goes from death to death.'¹⁰

So far we have considered the objective approach to the Reality. The subjective approach centres round the jiva. It is maya that makes the one Brahman appear as many jivas. This apparent creation conjures up the *pancha-koshas* and makes jivas think of themselves as individual beings. Therefore, the subjective approach takes into consideration the constituents, the *pancha-koshas*, of the jiva as well as the three states of experience—waking, dreaming, and deep sleep—for the purpose of unravelling the Reality behind them. The process starts with the Vedantic discernment of ‘*neti, neti*; not this, not this’.

Annamaya-kosha • It is the physical body made of bones, marrow, skin, flesh, blood, and nerves. The body receives external stimuli through the sense organs and responds through the motor organs. As the body is produced out of food and is dependent on it for survival, this sheath is also called the food sheath. It does not exist prior to conception and after death. It is constantly changing and is an object like a jar. The body is subject to external influences. Only a foolish person identifies with this bundle of

filthy perishable things that go by the name of body. Yet the delusion of having a body is so strong that we cannot let it go and consequently try to do everything to keep it comfortable. ‘A stupid person thinks he is the body; the book-learned person identifies himself with the mixture of body and soul; the sage possessed of realization, due to discernment looks upon the eternal Atman as his Self and thinks “I am Brahman”.’¹¹ The *annamaya-kosha* is the densest form *avidya* can take and hence it is the most delusive. The most beautiful body is shunned if there is no life in it.

Pranamaya-kosha • It is the second sheath and enlivens the first one. This sheath made of *prana*, life or vital force, comprises the five physiological systems of the body that control many functions connected to living. The first of the five is also called *prana*; it is engaged in breathing and perception and its movement is upwards. The next one is *apana* and, taking care of excretion, has its movement downwards. This is followed by *samana*, which governs digestion and the assimilation of food. Next is *vyana*, which controls blood circulation and supplies the digested nutrients to different parts of the body. Finally comes *udana*, which is the energy that propels the jiva from the body at the time of death. Some authors on Vedanta also speak of subsidiary *pranas* that control lesser functions like yawning, opening and closing the eyelids, and so on. But these are actually modifications of the five *pranas*. ‘Neither is the *pranamaya-kosha* the Self because it is a modification of *vayu*, air, and like the air it enters into and comes out of the body, and because it never knows in the least its own weal and woe or those of others’ (166).

Manomaya-kosha • The living body becomes useless if there is no mind in it. We see




people in a coma and similar states in which the body is immovable and life just hangs on tenuously. It is the mind that brings consciousness to both the body and the vital energy; that is why it is important. The organs of knowledge, together with the mind, form the *manomaya-kosha*. It is the cause of the diversity of such thing as 'I and mine'. Since it is conscious, it is powerful and creates attachment to the body and the sense objects. It is the repository of innumerable impressions. A person's existence is the creation of the mind, which waxes and wanes and is subject to many influences. In the state of dream, it creates a world of its own. 'There is no *avidya* outside the mind. The mind alone is *avidya*, the cause of the bondage of transmigration. When that is destroyed, all else is destroyed, and when it is manifested, everything else is manifested' (161). The *manomaya-kosha* cannot be the Atman because it has a beginning and an end and is subject to pain and suffering; it creates the diversity of qualifications, actions, means, and results.

Vijnanamaya-kosha • The fourth sheath is that of intelligence, also a modification of maya, and is endowed with the function of knowledge; it wholly identifies with the previous sheaths. 'It is without beginning, characterized by egoism, is called the jiva, and carries on the activities on the relative plane. Through previous desires it performs good and evil actions and experiences their results. Being born in various bodies, it comes and goes, up and down. It is this sheath of knowledge that has the waking, dream, and other states and experiences joy and grief' (171). The mental and intellectual sheaths differ in their nature and qualities: while the mind receives the stimuli generated by the sense organs, the intellect controls the thought processes. The *vijnanamaya-kosha* is effulgent due to its proximity to the

Atman and therefore one may wrongly believe that it is the Atman.

Anandamaya-kosha • The sheath of bliss is a reflection of the blissfulness of the Atman. It has its fullest play during profound sleep. This sheath is also a modification of maya. It is the basis of all our happiness. 'It appears in view when some object agreeable to oneself presents itself. It makes itself spontaneously felt by the fortunate during the fruition of their virtuous deeds, from which every corporeal being derives great joy without the least effort' (207). The *anandamaya-kosha* is not the Atman because it is also changeful and the effect of past good deeds. It is embedded in the other sheaths, which are also modifications of maya.

Seeing the reflection of the sun mirrored in the water a foolish person thinks it is the sun itself. Similarly, we identify ourselves with the Atman caught in the *vijnanamaya-kosha*. We then superimpose the attributes of the *vijnanamaya* and the other *koshas* on the Atman and are thus deluded. When the *pancha-koshas* are eliminated by the process of '*neti, neti*' what remains at the culmination is the Atman, the witness of the *pancha-koshas*. 'This self-effulgent Atman, which is distinct from the five sheaths, the witness of the three states, the real, the changeless, the untainted, the everlasting bliss—is to be realized by the wise person as his own Self' (211). 

References

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2. Acharya Shankara, *Brahma-jnanavali-mala*, 20.
3. *Mandukya Upanishad*, 2.
4. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 2.5.15.
5. *Katha Upanishad*, 1.2.20.
6. *Mandukya Upanishad*, 6.
7. *Katha Upanishad*, 1.2.12.
8. See *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 3.10.6.
9. *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 6.2.1.
10. *Katha Upanishad*, 2.1.11.
11. Acharya Shankara, *Vivekachudamani*, 160.

Neurobiology, Quantum Mechanics, and Consciousness

Dr Saibal Gupta

ARE THE MIND AND the brain different? Yes they are, even in the most elementary biological sense. A newborn child's brain is ignorant of Roger Penrose's three worlds: platonic, physical, and mental, and their three mysterious interconnections.¹ A regular healthy brain develops throughout life to acquire language, perception, intelligence, emotion, aesthetics, creativity, inspiration, art, and so on. Evolution has wonderfully sculpted the human brain, the most advanced material structure on earth. The convoluted multilayered cerebral cortex in humans has markedly increased the human brain area and its specialized neurons. This cerebral cortex is designed for learning. But each brain, like a fingerprint, is different. The brain is malleable because learning acts like a tiny hammer on it.

Individual brains develop by innumerable feedbacks. These feedback loops come from the body through neural, chemical, and endocrinal networks to the hypothalamus-pituitary-endocrine axis. Feedbacks also come from upbringing, education, culture, environment, and so on. The whole process is very complex, but the end result is what we call the mind. Though the mind is not directly visible, it is assumed in theories of the mind that through introspection we can access some part of it. Philosophy of the mind is a growing discipline that does not have a distinct area of study but combines many diverse theories that emphasize empirical results.

As expected, such nascent fields produce many controversies. The two main fields in conflict are neurobiology and quantum mechanics, with specialists in multiple fields lining up on either sides. Neurobiological research is making rapid progress with new methodologies and state-of-the-art technology. It investigates and identifies different centres in the brain as well as their functioning through specific neural networks. Neurobiologists think that conscious brain activities can be explained by classical physics, chemistry, and the theory of relativity; without recourse to quantum mechanics. The massive research on consciousness has been done mainly with visual awareness. It is not possible to summarize all research and sit in judgement. But two papers, which show the rapid progress in this field, have been mainly considered, one by Francis Crick and Christoff Koch² and the other by Christoff Koch and Klaus Hepp.³

There is, however, no dispute between these two disciplines regarding the micro-anatomic structures and constituents, neurons, of the mammalian brain, nor about its macro-anatomic structure.

Micro Structures in the Brain

The brain, which weighs about three pounds, is composed of about 100 billion neurons. In addition there are glial cells that outnumber neurons. Each neuron consists of afferent connections or dendrites, and an efferent connection, or axon, which ends in a synaptic junction. There are also

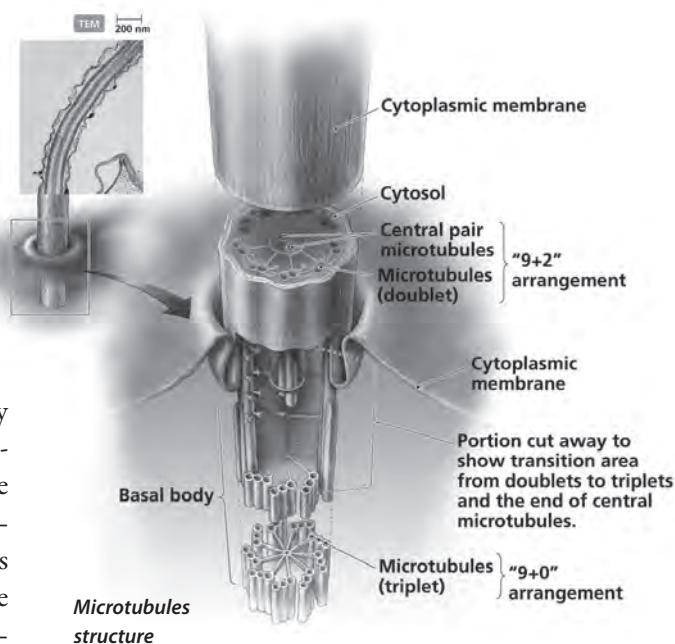
lateral connections between neurons. Each neuron may be connected to about 10,000 other neurons. The number of synaptic connections runs to hundreds of trillions!

There are also even smaller structures called microtubules, which are tubular structures enclosed by a membrane found within animal and plant cells. Of varying lengths, they have several functions. They help give shape to many cells and are major components of cilia and flagella, participate in the formation of the spindle during cell division—mitosis—and assist the movement of vesicles from the cell bodies of nerve cells towards the ends of those cells' long extensions—axons—and back to the cell bodies.

Now, how are these microtubules connected with consciousness? There are two pieces of circumstantial evidences. First, similar microtubules are present in unicellular eukaryotic or nucleated animals, like the amoeba and paramecium, as sensory organs to guide them towards food, away from danger, and used in propulsion. The second is the physiology of anaesthesia, where the anaesthetic agents, in humans or animals, are quite diverse in their chemical compositions, but attain the same objective. So the process is not chemical in nature but physical. The movement of electrons between the brain and the environment has been observed during induction and recovery from anaesthesia.

Direct evidence is through valid theoretical constructs of quantum-coherent phenomena in biological systems.

So long as the energy of metabolic drive is large enough, and the dielectric properties of the materials concerned are sufficiently extreme, then there is the possibility of large-scale quantum coherence similar to that which occurs in the phenomena of superconductivity and superfluidity—sometimes referred to as Bose-Einstein



condensation—even at the relatively high temperatures that are present in biological systems. ... With a Bose-Einstein condensate, it is as though the entire system containing a large number of particles behave as a whole very much as the quantum state of a single particle would, except that everything is scaled up appropriately.⁴

Without going any further, this construct would make one think that the process would involve bosons in Bose-Einstein condensate in a similar way as in superconductivity, which is present in the cosmos, though it is not spelt out specifically. Nature seems to prefer her accustomed tools and systems in diverse ways.

To a neurobiologist this is precisely the objection against quantum mechanics, because firstly, they think there is no possibility for such large-scale quantum coherence or entanglement in a hot 300 degrees Kelvin wet brain. Secondly, how would this quantum process influence the perfectly classical function of firing or non-firing of one or a group of neurons that can be beautifully explained through classical physics in neurobiological research? The quantum scientists

think that it is possible with microtubules, as they can switch to at least two different states, or conformations, and different messages can be sent through them.

According to Dr Stuart Hameroff, well-known for his studies on consciousness, the microtubules may behave like cellular automata and complicated signals could be sent along them. Being tubes, there is a plausible possibility they might isolate what is going on in their interiors from the random activity in the environment, especially if the vicinal water wraps their exterior as in their interior. They would of course concede the knowledge deficit of contemporary physics at the quantum-classical interface in the biological systems. There would be a similar problem elsewhere in physics, until further development, of what is today called the new physics.

Neurobiological research on consciousness has been done by studies on visual perceptual phenomena in higher mammals, like macaque monkey, and in human brain injuries or comatose conditions as well as on normal brains in recent years. In monkey experiments and human examinations the basic phenomenon is the same. But a feature that distinguishes humans from most animals is that we are not born with an extensive repertoire of behavioural programs that would enable us to survive on our own—‘physiological prematurity’. A calf can stand as soon as it is born, but a human baby takes one year. To compensate for this we have an unmatched ability to learn, that is, to consciously acquire such programs by imitation or exploration. Once consciously acquired and sufficiently exercised, these programs can become automated to the extent that their execution happens beyond the realms of our awareness. To give two examples, the incredible fine motor skills exerted in playing Beethoven or the sensorimotor coordination required to ride a motorcycle along a curved mountain road. Such

complex behaviours are possible only because a sufficient number of the subprograms involved can be executed with minimal or even suspended conscious control. In fact, the conscious system may actually interfere somewhat with these automated programs.

From an evolutionary standpoint it makes sense to have both automated behavioural programs, which can be executed rapidly in a stereotyped and automated manner, and a slightly slower system that allows time for thinking and planning more complex behaviour. This latter aspect may be one of the principal functions of consciousness.

Higher Brain Function

The basic cognitive functions of the brain and modulation of those functions have been discussed so far. But beyond that a great area of consciousness, seen only in humans, has not yet been touched.

A science of consciousness must explain the exact relationship between subjective mental states and brain states, as well as the nature of the relationship between the conscious mind and the electro-chemical interactions in the body. Progress in neurophysiology has come by focusing on the body rather than the mind. In this context the neuronal correlates of consciousness (NCC) may be viewed as its causes, and consciousness may be thought of as a state-dependent property of some undefined complex, adaptive, and highly interconnected biological system.

Discovering and characterizing neural correlates does not offer a theory of consciousness that can explain how particular systems experience anything at all, or how they are associated with consciousness, the so-called hard problem of consciousness, but understanding the NCC may be a step towards such a theory. Most neurobiologists assume that the variables giving rise to

consciousness are to be found at the neuronal level, governed by classical physics, but others have proposed theories based on quantum mechanics. However, Koch and Hepp at the end of their paper have concluded: 'Although we have, hopefully, convinced our physics colleagues that classical physics is superior framework for explaining HBF [higher brain function], we hurry to stress that on molecular and membrane level there are beautiful biophysical problems where the border between quantum and classical physics has to be drawn.'⁵ In common sense judgement integration seems to be desirable.

Foremost among the quantum physicists in this field today is Sir Roger Penrose. As a mathematical physicist he sees the world as a structure precisely governed according to timeless mathematical laws whose concepts are essential to describe the physical world. He also writes that this mathematics is not arrived at just by calculations but that something mysterious is profoundly involved in it, something like the higher mental awareness of the platonic world—though he concedes that there is far more to higher consciousness than the perception of mathematics.

Mind and Consciousness

Penrose is not the first mathematician to be aware of the inexplicable role that the mind plays in what may be called mathematical intuition. Henri Poincaré, a late nineteenth-century French mathematician, wrote a book named *Foundations of Science*. In it he described how solutions to mathematical problems suddenly came to him when he was not thinking about them. Once he was on a geological expedition and a solution occurred to him while looking intently at a rock face. Another time he solved a problem when he had taken coffee at night and was tossing in bed. He described this as the subliminal self, from where hidden ideas float up to the conscious mind.

The mind is as much an attribute of the body as the brain, and it is multilayered—its highest levels are beyond ordinary consciousness. In the physical level the body stores probably as much memory as the brain. That is only to be expected because the body cells have the same basic structure of the nucleus and most of them have the centrosome—the former containing the genetic material and the latter guiding cell function. In addition there are nerve cells scattered in the body and not all of them are directly connected to the neural network. Modern science has brought us material knowledge and altered our lives to an unimaginable degree. But it has cut our world into small pieces. Only now the need for an inclusive view is becoming apparent, from sociology to economics, to environment and mind. Nature seems to create this world with only a few sticks and balls, and we are only beginning to understand that.

Abner Shimony, Professor Emeritus of philosophy and physics at Boston University, responded to Penrose's seminar on mind and consciousness. Such professorial chairs, which were unthinkable only a few decades back, are coming into existence in some universities. I remember having read Werner Heisenberg's *Physics and Philosophy* as a just-passed undergraduate in the sixties and was mesmerized. I think this trend is an invaluable contribution of quantum physics in addition to everything it has brought, especially its influencing minds in many spheres.

Prof. Shimony quotes from Whitehead: 'The functionings of inorganic matter remain intact amid the functionings of living matter. It seems that, in bodies that are obviously living, a co-ordination has been achieved that raises into prominence some functions inherent in the ultimate occasions.'⁶ He criticizes Penrose by saying: 'What is missing in Roger's theory of mind is the idea of mentality to be "ontologically

fundamental in the Universe”.⁷ And he continues: ‘The modernized Whiteheadianism ... incorporates the concept of potentiality and entanglement in essential ways. Potentiality is the instrument whereby the embarrassing bifurcation between dim protomental and high-level consciousness can be bridged’ (151). ‘Finally, it is worth remarking that from a Whiteheadian point of view the hypothesis that the actualization of potentialities is achieved by the psyche of the perceiver is not as ridiculous, anthropocentric, mystical and unscientific as it is commonly regarded to be’ (159). Not many scientists agree to such a construct, and Stephen Hawking is one of them, raising objections like quantum gravity causing objective reduction of wave function, or that consciousness is not measurable from outside. Penrose’s response was of possibilities of experimental work in this field and the exciting nature of the problem of consciousness. An association with psychology is a possible approach.



Penrose’s response to Professor Shimony was: ‘First, let me say I very much appreciate Abner’s comments, which I think are extremely helpful. However, he suggests that by concentrating on the computability issue, I may be attempting to climb the wrong mountain! If, by this, he is pointing out that there are many important manifestations of mentality, other than non-computability, then I fully agree with him’ (173). According to Shimony, protomental is pervasive throughout nature, but high-level mentality is contingent upon the evolution of special hospitable complexes of occasions. With macromolecules—tubulin dimer—quantum superposition may have a short lifespan, with breaking and non-breaking of coherence to account for a definite conscious state. The mechanism is conjectural but exciting, if it is in quantum level and pervasive through nature with manifestation of ‘coherence’, ‘decoherence’ or ‘superselection’ and actualization of potential. In that case the root could be at the

basic level of creation. Would it be through quantum gravity? Is something else involved—a force, a mental field, a virtual particle like the menton?

Looking Back

From antiquity to contemporary times the development of our knowledge of the universe and of consciousness has been a fascinating journey that raises many questions and ideas.

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* records a beautiful dialogue between Maitreyi and Yajnavalkya. This great sage decided to renounce the world and went to his wife Maitreyi to take leave


of her. He asked her what she wanted, and she requested immortality—in this context immortality does not mean avoiding death but going beyond death. Jaynavalkya then taught Maitreyi: ‘As a lump of salt dropped into water dissolves in it and no one is able to pick the salt up, and from wherever one drinks the water, it tastes salty; in the same way, my dear, this great, endless, infinite Reality is but pure Intelligence. (The self) comes out (as a separate entity) from these elements, and (this separateness) is destroyed with them [in their contact]. After attaining (this oneness) it (the self) has no more [individual] consciousness. This is what I say, my dear.’⁸ Jaynavalkya further says:

Because when there is a duality, as it were, then one smells something, one sees something, one hears something, one speaks something, one thinks something, one knows something. (But) when for the knower of Brahman everything has become the Self, then what should he smell and through what, what should he see and through what, what should he hear and through what, what should he speak and through what, what should he think and through what, what should he know and through what? Through what should one know That owing to which all this is known—through what, O Maitreyi, should one know the Knower? (2.4.14).

This last question—‘through what, O Maitreyi, should one know the Knower’—has been posed many times by Swami Vivekananda in his lectures on Vedanta. These two verses settle that Brahman cannot be realized through the sense organs and the mind but only by stilling the sense organs and the mind so that pure Consciousness can be experienced.

Vedanta teaches that individual minds are tiny whirlpools in the immense ocean of the cosmic mind. In August 1890 Swami Vivekananda, as a wandering monk, sat in deep

meditation under a peepul tree beside the Kosi River at a place called Kakrighat, near Almora. ‘Later, returning to normal consciousness, he said to Akhandananda: “Oh, Gangadhar! I have just passed through one of the greatest moments of my life. Here under this peepul tree one of the greatest problems of my life has been solved. I have found the oneness of the macrocosm with the microcosm. In this microcosm of the body everything that is there [in the macrocosm], exists. I have seen the whole universe within an atom.”’⁹

Though the idea of an all-inclusive conscious creation has always been present in human consciousness, we are now living in a glorious age when science, philosophy, and spirituality are converging to that idea. This convergence will deeply influence humanity in a not so distant future, beyond present-day turmoil. 

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4. Roger Penrose, *Shadows of the Mind* (London: Oxford University, 1994), 367.
5. ‘The Relation between Quantum Mechanics and Higher Brain Functions: Lessons from Quantum Computation and Neurobiology’, 17.
6. A N Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Archives, 1991), 208.
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Compassion in the Diamond Sutra and the 'Sermon on the Mount'

Bob Stewart

(Continued from the previous issue)

A CHINESE ZEN MASTER once said: 'Before practicing Zen, mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers. While practicing Zen, mountains are no longer mountains and rivers are no longer rivers. After practicing Zen, mountains are mountains again and rivers are rivers again.'⁷ The dialectic of the *Prajnaparamita Sutra* is: (i) A rose—what we perceive through the application of our conceptual sword—is, (ii) not a rose, therefore—once we come to a rose without concepts and signs—(iii) it is a rose.

The 'Sermon on the Mount'

The other foundation of compassion we will consider is Jesus's 'Sermon on the Mount'. Anyone who wants to know what Jesus taught need go no further than reading this sermon. Jesus's mode of teaching was both similar to and different from that of Buddha. Jesus and Buddha both used paradox and seemingly conflicting statements to jangle the thinking of hearers and thus break through what blinded them to basic truths. Jesus also cut through our illusions and deceptions, but in a different way. Both Buddha and Jesus drew people's attention from the external to the internal, from rituals and symbols to their deeper meaning, from scripture or the dharma to their *signless* representations.

When asked why he did not become a Christian, Mahatma Gandhi famously replied: 'Oh, I don't reject your Christ. I love your Christ. It

is just that so many of you Christians are so unlike your Christ.'⁸ Gandhi's statement is loaded with insight and is a gentle confrontation with all Christians. To understand what Jesus said in the 'Sermon on the Mount' and to willingly live our lives within that understanding is to make a radical commitment to ending all hypocrisy and living a life of true love, compassion, and justice-seeking.

The 'Sermon on the Mount' presents essentially the same message of compassion as that of Buddha. It is found in the Gospel of Matthew and in a more abbreviated form in the Gospel of Luke. Either version is likely a compilation of sayings of Jesus made at different times. Excerpts from the Matthew version will be used because it is a fuller statement relevant to our purpose.

The sermon begins with what are called 'The Beatitudes', characterized by some as the Magna Carta of the kingdom of God. The phrase 'kingdom of God' is the primary organizing concept in Jesus's teaching. He uses this phrase to refer to living under the reign of God, of living in union with God. It is in the kingdom of God that we experience oneness with God and with one another. His life was about establishing the reign of God in the hearts of all people. Jesus says explicitly that the kingdom of God is not something out there; it is not the Church; it is not something we enter or experience in the future. He says in the Gospel of Luke: 'The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be

observed; nor will they say, “Look, here it is!” or “There it is!” For, in fact, the kingdom of God is within you.”⁹ Where love and compassion reigns in the heart, there is the kingdom of God.

The Beatitudes are succinct statements that, taken as a whole, convey what the citizens of the kingdom of God are like. They provide both a standard to live by and they summarize the central thrust of Jesus’s teaching. Here follow The Beatitudes,¹⁰ with my brief clarifying remarks.

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’—poverty of spirit is the absence of a spirit of grasping.

‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted’—compassion for others elicits compassion from others.

‘Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth’—nothing about the word ‘meek’ conveys passivity or weakness; rather, it has a connotation of gentleness: blessed are the gentle.

‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled’—this is referring to the quality of being a sincere seeker of God and righteousness: if we seek sincerely, we surely will be filled.

‘Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy’—this is the spirit of non-retaliation.

‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God’—only by removing the blinders of illusion, only by being fully honest with ourselves, only by being deeply sincere can we truly see God.

‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God’—as Buddha said: ‘For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time: hatred ceases by love, this is an eternal rule.’¹¹

The Beatitudes are statements that are certainly counter to the prevailing values of the culture we live in and they do not support the drivers of the economic engine. If taken seriously,



‘Sermon on the Mount’, by Fra Angelico (c.1440)

they make radical demands of our lives. They represent the antithesis of self-interest, striving, seeking competitive advantage, pride, and the drive of the ego. They bring us to inward self-examination and they expose our illusions.

Jesus was a Jew, a rabbi, and in the major section of the sermon following The Beatitudes he calls on those who follow the Jewish law—or any set of religious tenets or dharma—to move from a purely external understanding of religious life to the inner meaning. It is Jesus’s way of emphasizing the importance of mastering one’s minds to see the formless, *signless* wisdom of the scripture.

He begins this reinterpretation of the law to focus on its inner meaning by saying: ‘Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil.’¹² The scripture of the Hebrew people was not the problem; it was their avoidance of the universal spiritual meaning of the scripture that was the problem—and this is the problem about the scripture of any religious perspective. To focus only on adhering to the letter of the law or the

external meaning of a scripture or ritual is an easy way to miss the wisdom from which a scripture flows and to dismiss the demanding implications of the deeper inner meaning.

About the commandment against murder Jesus says: ‘You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, “You shall not murder”; and “whoever murders shall be liable to judgement.” But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgement’ (5:21–2). Jesus removes all smugness of one saying: ‘Well, I certainly keep this law; I have never killed anyone.’ When we harbour anger against others, it is the same as having a murderous spirit, or when we fail to respect the life of all living beings, we have violated the deeper meaning of ‘Thou shalt not kill’.

In a similar manner Jesus addresses adultery: ‘You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart’ (5:27–8). The inner spirit of lust and possessiveness is the real issue we should be concerned about, rather than simply restraining our external acts.

Jesus is pushing against a spirit of retaliation when he says in this sermon: ‘Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile’ (5:39–41). Jesus is not advocating that we allow anyone to run over us or abuse us; his point is that we should seek to root out of ourselves a spirit of retaliation. It is very much what Buddha meant when he said: ‘Hatred never ceases by hatred alone; hatred ceases by love.’ Paradoxically, non-resistance is what is effective in overcoming evil.

Then Jesus moves to an even more challenging level of what should be the extent of our

love and compassion: ‘You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”’ (5:43–4). Jesus’s message of boundlessness in our love for others is his way of saying what Buddha means when he speaks about removing our separation-creating illusions of self, person, living being, and lifespan.

Neither Buddha nor Jesus had much use for external rituals or other intentional external shows of piety. Here is a searching general statement by Jesus: ‘Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them’ (6:1). Jesus then clarifies that when we give to others it should be done quietly, ‘in secret’, with no outward show. The same holds true for prayer and fasting; these practices should take place without trying to be seen and without empty phrases or many words, which are really for others to hear and to be impressed by our devotion.

Following the wisdom of Jesus that is focused on the inner, deeper meaning of existence rather than on the externals will illuminate our illusions related to material things. His way of putting it in this sermon is: ‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also’ (6:19–21). He is telling us to focus on what is not subject to change, on what no one can take away from us. When we place priority on grasping that which is impermanent and subject to change, then it is clear evidence that our hearts are not in the right place—we are pursuing only an illusion of security and happiness.

Jesus used the metaphor of the eye and darkness to make the same points that Buddha makes

regarding the mind and illusions. 'The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!' (6:22–3). Darkness is the result of an unhealthy eye, as truth-obscurating illusions are the result of an unmastered mind.

Jesus makes this point in a different way when he says: 'For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks' (12:34). It is also out of what ever resides in our hearts that our actions come forth. Careless hearts and careless thoughts result in careless words and actions. For words and actions of true compassion to flow forth in our lives, we must pay more attention to the well-spring—which is our own hearts.

Jesus's most pointed criticism was not about personal failings but about hypocrisy. We seek to present ourselves as righteous and having God's special favour by comfortably focusing on the externals of religion, separating ourselves from others out of a sense of spiritual superiority and ignoring the state of our hearts. Love and compassion cannot be displayed—they can only shine forth. Jesus and Buddha were the antitheses of those who try to impress others with their devotion and piety, when this is a falsifying of the inward reality and only a mask that is worn or a role that is played. True piety or devotion is only that which flows from a pure heart and a mastered mind.

The teachings of Jesus have been obscured by human intellectualization and theological elaboration that have drawn our attention away from his core crystal-clear message. And Christian rituals and religious pomp all too often distort the immediacy and accessibility of his message. But the message conveyed by how he lived his life is unmistakable. Again and again in his every day actions, Jesus showed compassion to all and love

and forgiveness to those most abhorred and banished in his society. His life of love and compassion flowed out of his sense of oneness with the God of love. He says: 'I and the Father are one.'¹³ Christian theology has mutated Jesus's words to refer to a unique relationship beyond the attainment of ordinary human beings or a relationship limited to those who 'accept Jesus as their personal saviour' in a narrowly-defined manner. But Jesus recognized the reality of this unity with God as the original state of all beings, and the unity he felt with God was a unity available to all, without boundaries. These are the words of Jesus in a prayer found in the Gospel of John: 'As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they [all persons] also be in us' (17:21). Jesus saw his life as inseparable from God, whom he called his Father. But this same mystical union with God is the natural state of us all and not uniquely that of Jesus. This is perception without illusions.

Jesus's mission was to help others find their way back home, back to where they came from—enfolded in the boundless love of God. Most had lost their way and simply needed the light of love to see their way home. And we see Jesus going from place to place talking about the kingdom of God, but, more important, embodying his message. Ignoring the criticism of the 'righteous' of his day, he demonstrated a love with no boundaries by 'eating with sinners', responding with compassion and healing love to people with all kinds of suffering, stopping at a well to talk with a woman he did not know—a taboo in his time—who also happened to be a Samaritan, a religious affront to Jews who despised the Samaritans, and making a Samaritan the hero of one of his parables because, in contrast to the religiously-esteemed priest and Levite who were the other characters in the story, the Samaritan is the one who showed mercy and compassion to an injured man lying by the road.

Jesus was resolute in his certainty that it is a God of love in whom we live and move and have our being, and that living a life of radical compassion and love was the only life worth living. In fact, he was so resolute that the very person of Jesus was a constant confrontation with the hypocrisy and self-righteous exclusion and brutality and injustice of his day. And when his opponents, who had the most to lose from this confrontation, could no longer tolerate his presence, they killed him by crucifying him on a cross. The cross is a symbol of the self-sacrificial love of Jesus, a way of life he could not but live because of his unity with a God of love and a heart and mind purified of the illusions that make human beings lose their way.

Buddha's life shows similar clarity. The teachings and actions of Buddha and Jesus say the same thing. Buddha's mission was to find the way of ending human suffering. And because he would not be sidetracked by endless discussion of religious speculation, he chose simply not to discuss notions of God or ultimate Reality. He was single-mindedly set on drawing on his own experience of enlightenment to help others awaken from ignorance. By helping others master their minds, in the new state of awakening, they would find a way to be free of suffering, no matter what their external circumstances might be, and they would experience nirvana. In his own way, in his own time, and in his own culture, Jesus taught and embodied the same message. One difference between Jesus and Buddha is that Jesus was matter-of-factly clear that he saw God as the source of all life and that this God could be called 'Love'.

In the Bhagavadgita we read: 'They live in wisdom who see themselves in all and all in them, who have renounced every selfish desire and sense craving tormenting the heart. Neither agitated by grief nor hankering after pleasure, they live free from lust and fear and anger.

Established in meditation, they are truly wise. Fettered no more by selfish attachments, they are neither elated by good fortune nor depressed by bad. Such are the seers.'¹⁴ All of us can also be seers. Seeing ourselves in all and all in us, an insight accessible to all of us, is the foundation for true compassion, love, and justice-seeking.

This is what St Paul was talking about when he said: 'It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me.'¹⁵ We can also say that 'it is no longer I that live, but Buddha lives in me, or Krishna lives in me.' Buddha consciousness, Christ consciousness, or Krishna consciousness means being truly awake, being freed from illusions, being set free, finding our lost souls, discovering our original goodness, seeing God—and then love and compassion and justice-seeking will simply happen. It will be as natural and as unconscious as our breathing and, just as surely, it will give us life.

It is when we together enter this common space of commitment to a life of love, compassion, and justice-seeking that we find the artificial barriers of culturally-determined beliefs and rituals and symbols removed from between us. We will recognize with Sri Ramakrishna that the illusory differences are only due to place, temperament, and name. Every authentic religion will point to the path for ending our illusions, liberating ourselves and others from the barriers within and thereby allowing love, compassion, and justice-seeking to flow through our lives.

These are the four vows of the bodhisattva:

Sentient beings are numberless,
I vow to save them all;
Defilements are inexhaustible,
I vow to cut them off;
Dharma gates are limitless,
I vow to learn them all;
The Buddha's way is unsurpassable,
I vow to accomplish it.¹⁶



(References on page 694)

Eternal Words

Swami Adbhutananda

Compiled by Swami Siddhananda; translated by Swami Sarvadevananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

A PERSON RECEIVES PRAISE on account of good work. Again, a person becomes great only by such work. This I see clearly. Have these Westerners become great so easily? They do not want to sit idly but are all the time active and doing something or other. They are heroes of action. Seeing their good works, God has made them great. What will you gain by being jealous of them? Will you become great simply by hating them? That is not possible. If you want to be great, give up hatred. Work like them. Then God's grace will descend on you. No one can become great unless God makes one great. He watches our actions and gives accordingly whatever is to be given. A hateful man can never make progress. If you want to rise high up, renounce hatred. Perform good works alone.

People become jealous seeing that someone is enjoying sumptuous food. See what a mean nature! They do not understand that he is enjoying good food because of his past good deeds. It is that which is giving him happiness. The jealous people do not do good works; yet they want happiness. My dear, can one obtain happiness by fraud?

You have seen the world for such a long time. Now you have grown in age. What more is there for you? Do a little japa and perform some austerities. If you want peace, offer everything at his feet—your good and bad, sins and merits, all that you have. Giving him the power of attorney and remaining carefree, practise spiritual discipline without pretence. If you do not

double-deal with God, he will assume each of your responsibilities.

Bhagavan Veda Vyasa was born from the womb of Satyavati, a fisherwoman. The sage Narada was the son of a maidservant. The sage Satyakama was the son of a prostitute. How many sages and great people like these were born into a lowly home, yet they became the object of worship for humanity. By these examples one can understand that in the kingdom of God there is no high or low. He does not weigh the details of one's birth. Rather, he regards one's karma. Distinctions of birth and caste are all man-made. They have no validity. In the realm of righteousness, all such concepts are worthless. Everyone is equal.

You will have to suffer the consequences of your own karma, whether you know it or not. If you put your hand into fire, knowingly or otherwise, it will surely burn. Exactly like that an intelligent person, knowing this principle, will not perform actions that will force him to endure suffering in the end. It is said in the Gita that 'the way of karma is very complex'. This is very true. You can see that bad karma, which you previously thought to be good, may in time bring a bad result. For that reason one should perform actions only after much consideration. It cannot be said that errors will never occur if one discerns. Errors may still occur, but the chance of their recurrence will be reduced [if one discerns]. People who engage in action without forethought are bound to make more mistakes and suffer more as a result.

No one is fallen. None is a sinner. Only karma is to be blamed. Renouncing bad actions, if one performs only good deeds, one becomes holy. Ratnakara was a thief, yet renouncing that old attitude he performed sadhana and became a sage [Valmiki]. For that reason it is wrong to hate any person; rather let one hate only his karma.

Becoming a devotee is not a joke. One cannot become a bhakta just by uttering a few devotional words or shedding a few tears. Only one in whom genuine devotion has blossomed is a true bhakta. When one attains such devotion, one becomes God-like; no hatred, jealousy, or egotism can remain in such a person. What I see in most cases is only a verbal display of devotion. The heart, in contrast, remains filled with the poisons of jealousy, hatred, and pride. Again, you will see people who act very humbly, speak innocently, make offerings to brahmanas, and feed the sadhus, but at the same time, cheat the widow, bring ruin to their own brother, and brutally injure others for a bit of money. See the play of maya! A devotee can never do such things. All of you say, 'bhakta! bhakta!' My child, do devotees grow on trees? Out of all of those who pose as devotees, very few have devotion. Can one become a greater devotee by making bigger donations, my dear? I see that you are holding such an attitude. Even so, what fault is it of yours? You cannot see what is within in order to measure it.

A selfless gift is given without expectations. Jesus Christ declared: 'Let not your right hand know what your left hand has given.' He has said that it should be kept hidden. But how many can do that? Rather, if one gives a paisa, one will inform seven villages; one will print in the newspaper how much one has given! See what pride!

One thinks that good times are caused by oneself whereas bad times are caused by another. I see that this is human nature. You may do a thousand good deeds, but should you by

chance even once do something a little bad, then you will have no escape—you will be maligned. Knowing this to be human nature, people of discernment pay no heed to others' comments. They go on doing their duties.

What dharma will he perform whose parents cannot find food to eat? He has come to become a monk, while his parents go hungry. There can be no dharma for that able-bodied son whose parents are starving. How can there be any dharma [for him]? Whom is he going to call upon? It is God's command: 'Serve your parents. Never let them suffer the pangs of starvation or the lack of clothing.' God becomes angry with the person who fails to provide one's parents with food and clothing or causes them anguish by speaking harshly to them. Being an avatara the Master exemplified how one ought to serve one's parents. He never made his parents suffer. Parents endure many hardships in raising their children. Children today are betraying their parents. See, what a callous state of mind! People are hurting the very ones by whose grace they have entered the world and have become great. And such persons have come to perform dharma! There will never be any dharma for such persons.

In this world there is no true relationship with the brother, sister, father, or son. Everyone is born with one's karma. When their experience is over, they leave. No one is accountable for anyone else's karma. A person may think, 'I am gambling and cheating others in order to maintain my wife and children; why will they not share in my sins?' He is mistaken. See how Ratnakara used to sustain his family by highway robbery. The sage Narada told him: 'No one will share in your sins.' Ratnakara asked him: 'Why? My entire family will share in this. They eat whatever I bring them.' Sage Narada said: 'Go and ask them.' When he did, not one of them agreed. Each told him: 'How could we know

by what means you were supporting us? Moreover, we never asked you to do such things. Why should we share in your sins? Understand the situation!’ Then Ratnakara understood that no one in this world belongs to anyone else. One reaps only one’s own karma. After that Ratnakara renounced everything and engaged in severe austerities. By repeating the name of Rama he became blessed. All negative thoughts left him. He obtained the vision of God and attained samadhi. That same Ratnakara became the sage Valmiki, whom today everyone honours and worships. He wrote the incomparable Ramayana. No one has seen such a person again.

As you have become rich, go on giving freely to others. In your next birth, you will get it back. The proper way to spend money is to remove others’ suffering. Also, in order to maintain proper dharma, you must give up your friendship with wealth and money.

Faith and Trust

Rama gave Hanuman a garland of pearls in his court. Hanuman started closely scrutinizing the necklace. Looking at each pearl he began crushing them between his teeth. After seeing what was inside, he cast them away. Observing this, Lakshmana got angry and said: ‘You are a monkey. How can you understand the value of such pearls? These pearls are so valuable, yet you waste them by crushing them to bits with your teeth.’ Rama said: ‘Ask him why he has done this.’ When asked, Hanuman said: ‘To see whether Rama is there inside of them!’ Angered by this, Lakshmana exclaimed: ‘You say you are seeing whether Rama is inside each pearl; is Rama inside of you? Being satisfied with your service to him, Rama has presented this to you. But being a monkey, you cannot value it. Instead you crush it with your teeth.’ Hearing this, Hanuman pierced and tore open his chest with his fingernails to show

that Rama and Sita were residing there! Lakshmana received a great lesson. An object is worthless if it does not contain Rama and Sita within.

Moved by the devotion of Vidura, Bhagavan Sri Krishna gave up royal dishes and accepted rice and spinach, never casting even a momentary glance at the royal food. God wants devotion alone, nothing else. When one calls upon God with one’s body, mind, and soul, he becomes pleased and bestows one with his vision.

If a person calls upon God with all sincerity, God gives him understanding and removes all doubts. The Master sat on the seat of Sri Chaitanya. Bhagavandas Babaji became doubtful. One day, taking Hriday with him, the Master [Sri Ramakrishna] appeared before Bhagavandas Babaji. While the Master was moving about, Hriday started talking. Babaji asked: ‘Who is he?’ Hriday answered: ‘He is Paramahamsadeva. He lives at Dakshineswar. It is he who sat on the seat of Sri Chaitanya.’ Seeing that, Babaji said: ‘Yes, it is indeed his seat; he has the right to sit there.’

One day, after coming to Dakshineswar, the father of one of our brother-disciples was slandering the Master to his son. Not being able to tolerate that, the brother-disciple said: ‘How dare you! Get out of here right now.’ His father immediately left, but after a few moments he returned and said: ‘I am very pleased to see your devotion for your guru.’ Saying this, he blessed his son profusely. You can yourself directly see what reverence he had for his guru! The Master used to say: ‘Never hear a word of slander against your guru.’ If you are able, teach the slanderer a good lesson; if you cannot, get out of that place. It is forbidden to hear the slander of one’s guru or to join in such conversation.

Every word that the Master has spoken has invariably become a reality. One day, someone was showing the Master’s photograph to him.

Seeing that photo the Master said: 'Someday this will be worshipped in every home.' This has indeed come to pass; you can witness that. He also told Swamiji: 'You will have to do much of my work.' Moreover, he said: 'I have many such devotees whose language I do not know.' All these words have been shown to be true. Not a single word was incorrect. Even after seeing all of this, if one does not develop faith in the Master, it is the result of one's karma.

What other work does a married woman have? She will serve her husband for her own well-being. She will suffer if she does not honour her husband. A husband is like a god to a woman. If she can serve him regarding him as a god, surely it will bring all auspiciousness; it can even bring spiritual knowledge. It is said in the Mahabharata that a brahmana woman attained knowledge solely by serving her husband with a one-pointed mind. She used to worship her husband considering him to be God; she did not know anybody else but him. Her husband was her subject of meditation. She would get engrossed day and night in serving him. Serving her husband only with one-pointed attention, she attained the highest realization.

One who can spend the entire life repeating the name of God is truly fortunate. It is extremely difficult to develop faith in God because God cannot be directly perceived. God can tangibly be seen by doing sadhana. All of this is God's grace. Is it an ordinary matter to spend one's whole life in the hope of the vision of the one who is beyond direct perception? How free from doubt one must become for this to be possible!

Girish Babu used to say: 'I don't fear God, but I do fear those swindling devotees. They understand nothing, yet create much trouble. God knows everything about me. There is nothing unknown to him. I rest within his shelter.

Can I fear him?' This is very true. If one fears God, God cannot be loved. Where there is fear, there is no love.

The Grace of God

Spirituality is easily attained by one on whom God has bestowed his grace. Again, for one deprived of his grace, that spirituality is very difficult to attain. God's grace is required. Nothing happens without it.

Renunciation, detachment, forbearance, these are the limbs of austerity. One must practise these if one wants to attain spirituality. To make the mind free from sense objects renunciation, detachment, and forbearance are required. Nothing happens without these. If one's mind is not free from sense objects, one cannot attain spirituality. Call upon God. With your whole heart, pray to him. Then by his grace everything will be accomplished. He will restore your mind and reveal himself.

Living in this world of maya we lack confidence in ourselves even until our death. Who knows when and what type of maya God will cast upon us? Suppose you think you will lead your life in a very honest way but in between maya plays such a trick that when impure thoughts enter your mind, you are unable to comprehend it. No one can outdistance the power of maya. Maya makes the unreal real and the real unreal. No one can say with confidence, 'I will surely spend my life in the right spirit.' That is why Sri Krishna said in the Gita: 'For one who takes refuge in me, I save him from maya.' He is all powerful. It is his maya. He can do everything at will. One who, by his grace, can truly live a righteous life until death will be saved. His grace is necessary. Without that, such a task is impossible. Hindus, Muslims, and Christians all believe that after death everyone will remain in Prakriti.

(To be continued)

Svarajya Siddhih: Attaining Self-dominion

Gangadharendra Saraswati

Translated from Sanskrit and annotated by Swami Narasimhananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

THE FOLLOWERS OF the Nyaya and Vaisheshika schools hold that this universe was created out of atoms. This position has to be examined because we, the Advaitins, feel it to be untenable. These schools of thought believe in Asatkaryavada and consequently hold that the effect is not present before its production. Let us now examine the line of reasoning of these schools regarding the creation of the universe. In the beginning the atoms were in a state of motion or flux, something similar to the chaotic state propounded by modern science. Nothing was produced for some time and there was no effect whatsoever, only the cause in the form of the atoms. So, the name and form of the atoms did not change, nor did their size. They had their original sizes.

So far so good; the problem arises after this. At the time of the beginning of creation, because of the merits and demerits of the jivas, individual souls, and by the will of Ishvara, these atoms come together in various combinations and form dyads, triads, and so on, and thereby start forming complete objects as effects. The dyads and triads acquire the same form and properties of the atoms they are made of. However, the dyads and triads have changes in their sizes that are not present in the atoms. The dyads and triads are only better combinations of the same kind as that of their constituent atoms, that is, similar atoms come together and create a better

compound of that kind. This implies that whatever is formed by the atoms would be similar to them. But the number and size of the atoms are smaller than the number and size of the dyads. Also, the number and size of the triads are bigger than the number and size of the dyads. However, this is not logical, as the atoms are eternal and indivisible. If it is held that the dimensions are the same till the level of dyads but they increase from the stage of triads, that does not make sense because if atoms do not change in size, the dyads and triads also cannot change in size.

If it is held that atoms combine and become dyads and triads by slowly breaking up and thus losing their indivisible nature, then we hold that such a situation is not possible because atoms are action-less according to the schools of Nyaya and Vaisheshika. That is why we Advaitins put forth the questions: How do the numerous atoms come together to produce dyads and triads? What is the cause of the activity in the atoms leading to their forming dyads and triads? Is it because of the effort or will of Ishvara? Or is it because of the merits and demerits of the individual souls? Or is it because of the removal of the differences between different substances by combination of atoms? Is it because of the characteristics, like speed? It cannot be because of the will of Ishvara, as we have set aside that argument earlier. It cannot be because of the merits and demerits of the individual souls, as the individual souls can have no merit or

demerit after the dissolution of the universe and before the next creation. It cannot be because of the removal of differences, as there is no 'after dissolution' and before the next creation—there is no substance other than the atoms. Also even for an interaction between atoms in the beginning of creation, there is the need of action, and for action between atoms to take place there should be creation, and such reasoning would lead to infinite regress. The reason for the combination of atoms in the beginning of creation cannot be the characteristics such as speed, because there is no evidence to suggest that just after dissolution and before a new creation there are such characteristics in atoms. Such postulation would also lead to the defect of cumbersomeness. Further, it is held by the schools of Nyaya and Vaisheshika that in the previous dissolution too the atoms were indivisible, and that in the earlier creation also the combination of atoms was the cause of creation. Then the defect will be same across creations, and the indivisibility of only the atoms is disproved. Also in the beginning of creation there cannot be any merit or demerit of individual souls, and consequently there cannot be any happiness or misery. As that would be not present then, and also there would not be a setting conducive for the incurring of merit or demerit. This would also mean that if the line of reasoning of the Nyaya and Vaisheshika schools is followed, then there cannot be any dissolution because the merits or demerits of the individual souls are considered to be always present. Hence, their affirmation of the atoms being in a state of chaos or vibrant activity is nothing but empty talk.

Even if we were to accept that atoms are active at the beginning of creation, there is no ground for concluding that there is combination of atoms. It is held that atoms are indivisible and cannot be divided or modified. If that is so, then how do two atoms combine? It is empirically observed

that a combination of objects always takes place in a particular portion of that object. However, if we were to hold that the combination of atoms takes place at a particular part of the atoms, then the indivisibility of the atoms would be quashed. We can neither hold that atoms combine in their entirety, because then there would be no essential difference between an atom and a dyad. Also, a combination of objects cannot pervade both the objects in their entirety, since it is common knowledge that without an entry point, like a hole, it is impossible for one object to enter into another. Hence, the atoms cannot be held to combine in their entirety. If it is held that an atom combines with another from whichever direction it comes and it enters from an imagined area, then we would say that the Nyaya and Vaisheshika schools are also resorting to an inexplicable and unidentified cause of creation just like the maya or ignorance of Advaita Vedanta. We welcome them for having the same idea as ours. However, this does not appear to be their stand.

Even if we were to accept that the atoms somehow combine with other atoms, the formation of a dyad different from the constituent atoms is not plausible. The cause and the effect have a relation of similarity. But here the effect is said to be totally different from the cause. The position that the parts are inherent in the whole and the atoms are inherent in the dyad is also not plausible. The atoms are different from the dyad. The relation of two atoms produces something that is unrelated to them. By the combination resulting in a dyad we cannot understand the relation between the dyad and the atoms. And to understand the relation, if we go back to the state of the atoms before combination, then again we are left with the problem of non-similarity of the atoms with the dyad. This would go on in a cycle and lead to the defect of infinite regress. Two atoms coming together are the same as the

Samudra manthan,
the churning of
the ocean of milk
(c.1860–70)



dyad they form, but this is not accepted by the Nyaya and Vaisheshika schools. Then we can also not accept that two atoms combine to form a dyad, as such position is a wrong one. The parts of the effect cannot be different from the parts of the cause. Further, it is only proper to posit a combination of two different objects like a pit and a tree. One plants a tree in a pit or a tree grows from a pit. So, how can one think of the combination of two similar atoms? As has been proved earlier, it is not possible to hold that such combination occurs because of the action of the atoms. Moreover, inherence is based upon the relation of the two objects concerned, the destruction of one object leads to the destruction of the relation, as relation cannot be established based on one object alone. The relation between two objects is different from the objects themselves, and the destruction of such relation destroys the possibility of their combination. Is the relation between the part and the whole an all-pervasive, whole relation? No, because we see that though different organs, like the ears, form part of the cow, it is only through the udder that one can milk the cow. It is observed that if an

object is completely present in one place, it is impossible for that same object to be present elsewhere. There is also a difference between the part and the whole. If it is held that a part is located at a particular place of another part, then in a particular place of the second part the first part would be located, and again, the second part would be located in a particular place of the first part, and this cycle of dependent location would go on forever leading to the defect of infinite regress. To establish the relation between two objects they should be of comparable dimensions. In the Bhagavata there is the description of the churning of the milk-ocean.¹⁰¹ The gods had incurred a curse that took away all their strength. A delegation of the gods went to Bhagavan Vishnu seeking a cure for this lack of strength and also to find a way to check the rising power of the demons. Vishnu advised them to churn the milk-ocean in order to obtain nectar. Since the milk-ocean was big, the churning rod and the churning rope were to be of similar proportions. So, Mount Meru was used as the churning rod and the giant snake Vasuki was used as the churning rope. Here is an example of

how only objects of comparable proportions are used together or are mutually related.

Let us approach this issue from a different perspective. The characteristics of the substance produced out of the combination of atoms are inherent and all-pervasive, and the qualities of the cause are the source of the qualities of the effect. Even if we hold that the combination of the atoms is possible, there is a problem regarding the difference in the dimensions of a dyad and a triad. Since the properties of the effect have their source in the properties of the cause, the dimensions of a triad should be similar to that of a dyad. But then the Nyaya and Vaisheshika schools hold that a triad is larger than a dyad. How can a triad be larger than a dyad? Such a position is not logical and is also against empirical experience. Also, how can the triad be not eternal when the atom is eternal? Being illogical, the stand of the schools of Nyaya and Vaisheshika is being set aside.

Every object like the pot is based on the substratum of Brahman, and thus it is existent in Brahman even before its production. This is what we Advaitins uphold. There is no entity different from Brahman in the effect. It is said in the Upanishads: 'All transformation has speech as its basis, and it is name only. Earth as such is the reality.'¹⁰² 'All reject one who knows it as different from the Self. This brahmana, this kshatriya, these worlds, these gods, these Vedas, these beings, and these all are this Self.'¹⁰³ The evolution and dissolution of this universe is due to maya, which is inexplicable.

The stand of the Nyaya and Vaisheshika schools has been quashed. They are also called half Buddhists because of some similarities with Buddhist thought. Now we will quash the position of Buddhists proper. Buddhists are broadly of four schools: Sautrantika, Vaibhashika, Yogachara, and Madhyamika. Buddha and his disciples saw the attachment of people to sense objects and

accordingly preached the non-reality of everything. The avatara of Buddha demonstrated the truth that attachment to external sense objects is futile. The Vaibhashikas are similar to the Sarvastivadins, who hold that everything exists and is real. The Madhyamikas directly propound Shunyata, the non-reality of this universe. It has been said: 'The teachings of the protectors of the world accord with the (varying) resolve of living beings. The Buddhas employ a wealth of skilful means, which take many worldly forms. (Teachings may differ) in being either profound or vast; at times they are both. Though they sometimes may differ, they are invariably characterized by shunyata or non-reality.'¹⁰⁴

(To be continued)

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102. *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 6.1.4.
103. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 4.4.7.
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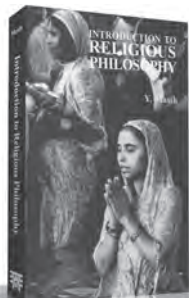
(Continued from page 686)

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7. *The Diamond Sutra that Cuts through Illusion*, 56.
8. Quoted in Jude Thaddeus Langeh Basebang, *Africa Needs Gandhi!—The Relevance of Gandhi's Doctrine of Non-violence* (Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal / Gandhi Book Centre); available at <http://www.mkgandhi.org/africaneedsgandhi/gandhi's_message_to_christians.htm> accessed 6 September 2013.
9. Luke, 17:20–1.
10. Matthew, 5:3–9.
11. *Dhammapada*, 1.5.
12. Matthew, 5:17.
13. John, 10:30.
14. Bhagavadgita, 2.56–7.
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REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



Introduction to Religious Philosophy

Y Masih

Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 41
U A Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar,
Delhi 110 007. Website: www.mlbd.com. xv + 410 pp. ₹ 295.

In the exciting geometry of religio-philosophical speculation, the triangle of *theos*, God, *cosmos*, world, and *anthropos*, human, occupies a key position. The absorbing discussion centring round this triad has triggered interesting theories that supply the grist to the mill of lively discussion in the book under review.

The discussion draws copiously on the views of a host of philosophers, theologians, and mystics such as G Galloway, J Martineau, J Findlay, R Hare, Immanuel Kant, R Hastings, H McCloskey, S Radhakrishnan, Paul Tillich, Acharya Shankara, and Sri Ramakrishna. This investigation into the tangled skein of religious philosophy is thought-provoking and presents a kaleidoscopic story of diverse and contrasting views on the complex aspects of the theme. What is the definition of religion? How does religion relate to theology, philosophy, morality, art, science, and psychology? What are the various metaphysical theories of religion? These questions are tackled in the first three chapters of the book. The author's differentiation of religious philosophy from religion and theology in chapter two is quite revealing. According to the author, 'religion is a system of lived experiences' (19), in terms of self-involvement and commitment to the object of religious devotion and orientation. Theology is 'a thinking about religious thinking' (20), in terms of current concepts. Religious philosophy is a 'purely objective and disinterested enquiry into the concepts and the beliefs of various religions and their theologies' (ibid.).

The differentiation of the functions of the triple disciplines comes out in bold relief when the author dramatically says that in religion 'a theist talks to God' (19), a theologian 'participates in the commitment of the religion to which it belongs' (20), and in religious philosophy 'a philosopher talks about God with disinterestedness and detachment' (ibid.). It would seem from the quoted lines that one need not be a religionist or a theologian to be a religious philosopher.

Tracing the etymology of the word 'religion' the author says: 'Religion with its derivative of *re* and *legere* means to bind its adherents together and also to bind the loose ends of lower impulses within each man himself' (26). Such a definition clearly means that religion and morality cannot be mutually exclusive but cross-fertilize each other. The phrase 'bind its adherents together' can, in its deepest sense, project religion as a master unifier.

In the third chapter, 'Metaphysical Theories of Religion', the chief theories are comparatively studied and explained: (i) Deism, where the emphasis is on the transcendent aspect of God; (ii) Pantheism, which lays stress on the immanence of God; (iii) and Theism, holding that transcendence and immanence equally inhere in God.

In the fourth chapter, 'Foundation of Religious Belief', the source of religious belief is traced to one or more of these four factors: reason, revelation, faith, and mystic experience. It is pertinent to recall in this context that, according to Vedanta, the roles assigned to *shabda pramana*, scriptural revelation, *shraddha*, faith, and *brahma-anubhuti*, mystic experience, in engendering, strengthening, and validating religious beliefs are primary—the reason is relegated to a secondary status of corroborating the validity of engendered religious beliefs. It means that reason cannot go against the supersensuous spiritual

intimations emanating from revelation, faith, and mystic experience.

The canvas on which the author paints his thematic picture is amazingly wide. Chapter five examines the *raison d'être* and nature of religious assertions—whether analogical, empirical, didactic-theistic, mythic, or 'convictional'. The views of a number of religious scholars on this issue are critically analysed and examined.

Such varied and vibrant topics presented in chapters as 'A General View of Religion and Language', 'Proofs for the Existence of God'—arguments concerning ontological, cosmological, teleological, religious experience, and moral argument for the existence of God—'Attributes of God', 'Problem of Evil', 'Problem of Immortality', and 'Encounter of Religions' are discussed in a scholarly manner by citing a plethora of quotations from Western and Eastern theologians and mystics.

In conclusion, it may be asserted that the book is a marvellous product of painstaking study, research, and analysis. One may not agree with many of the views of the galaxy of religious and philosophical giants who stalk the pages of the book. One cannot, however, fail to be impressed by the earnestness, passion, and conviction with which the arguments and conclusions are pressed forwards. The very fact that since the first edition in 1971 the book has gone through seven reprints testifies to the popularity and reception it commands from many readers. The rationale of the work is derived from its unstated assumption that God is analysable, explainable, describable, debatable, definable, and measurable.

Incisive and authoritative comments and remarks of eminent philosophers and theologians trying to unravel the mystery of God comprise the main stuff of this book. But to Indian mysticism, Brahman is beyond rational thought and intellectual comprehension and is realizable only through silent communion, deep meditation, and dedicated inward quest. One cannot help feeling this incompatibility while going through this work, which is largely based on the view that God is the 'other' to be known and worshipped. Indian mysticism declares that the *pratyagatman*, inner Self, is to be directly intuited and

identified with. Is not Brahman, the crux of Vedanta, the eternal subject meant less for hair-splitting arguments and theorization than for direct realization and experience? To invoke Sri Ramakrishna's telling analogy, intellectual acrobatics of theorizing and research about God is like the counting of the leaves on a mango tree, while silent experience and realization of God is like the eating and enjoying of those fruits. The *Katha Upanishad* says: 'The Self cannot be attained by much study, nor through the intellect, nor through much hearing. It can be known through the Self alone that the aspirant prays to; this Self of that seeker reveals its true nature.' The value of the book lies in its being an excellent source of *paroksha* jnana, mediate knowledge, the tremendous threshold that should open out into the ethereal stratosphere of *aparoksha anubhuti*, direct experience.

N Hariharan
Madurai



Biography of Guru Devi Sri Janaky Matha

Dr G Swaminathan

Gurudevi Sri Janaky Matha Ashram, 15 Ganapathy Nagar, Thanjavur 613 001. 2012. xiii + 200 pp. Price not mentioned.

The appearance of enlightened souls in our world parched by materialism is a reminder of a missing dimension in our lives. It is the neglect of this larger and essential dimension of life that makes the world poor and ignorant.

Guru Devi Sri Janaky Matha, an enlightened disciple of Sri Ramana Maharshi, was born at Kollengode in Kerala. Her life, ordinary from outside, was replete with extraordinary spiritual experiences. She was a yogi and a *jivan-mukta*, free while still living. Married at the age of thirteen Sri Matha epitomized humility, truth, tolerance, generosity, purity, self-discipline, tranquillity, and above all an intense yearning for moksha, liberation.

As a young girl Sri Matha intensely prayed to obtain the grace of a guru. In one of her visions she saw that the god Subramanya appeared and directed her to meet Sri Ramana Maharshi in

Tiruvannamalai. She did so and by Sri Ramana's grace obtained the highest knowledge, becoming a *jivanmukta* even before she was thirty-two years old.

Sri Matha's life serves as an ideal example of a housewife striving to attain moksha. Her biography will immensely inspire all those who seek liberation, irrespective of who they are. This biography contains a concise sketch of her life as narrated by herself and corroborated with the diaries of her husband, Dr Ganapathy Iyer. It was first written in English by K R K Murthy, but for some reason she did not agree to have it published, though Sri Ramana Maharshi wanted to hear it read in his presence. Later, at her sixtieth birthday, she yielded to the persistent requests of Sri Narayanaswamy, now Swami Gurudasananda, who had picked up the thread and completed her biography.

The overall quality of this revised third edition is good; however, there are some typos and also sentences that need to be grammatically restructured. There is no glossary, index, or chronology, which is essential in a biography.

Anuradha Girish
Bengaluru



Ayurveda: Nature's Medicine

Dr David Frawley and
Dr Subash Ranade

Motilal Banarsidass Publishers. 2011.
xi + 357 pp. ₹ 295.

A popular adage says: 'One should aim at adding "life" to years and not years to life.' Is it possible to achieve both the goals in one's life? Ayurveda, the science of health and longevity, emphatically affirms the necessity and possibility of combining longevity with well-being, vivacity, and zest. The title of this book is significant as it emphasizes Ayurveda's attunement with nature in the formulation of its powerful healing system.

The authors aptly call Ayurveda the 'science of life', which presents a striking alternative to the biochemical model of modern medicine. Ayurveda is holistic. It views an individual as a triple strand of body, mind, and spirit. Ayurveda, whose hoary traditions are of Vedic origin,

rightly says that a person is a psychophysical being with a deep spiritual core. It thus focuses more on the living individual rather than on external pathogens. The authors speak of the uniqueness of Ayurveda: 'Ayurveda reflects a deep study not only of the body but also the mind and the spirit beyond the mind and body. It reflects an in-depth system of psychology that understands the dynamics of karma and consciousness' (4).

The book is divided into two parts. The first deals with the Ayurvedic approach to health, and the second discusses methods of treatment. There are also appendices, bibliography, resources, and an index. The first part contains interesting chapters such as 'Enduring Principles of Ayurveda', 'Individual Constitution: Prakriti', 'The Ayurvedic Approach to Health', and 'The Three Pillars of Life'. This part succinctly states the threefold aim of Ayurveda: (i) To achieve positive health for the individual, (ii) to aid in the upliftment of society, and (iii) to facilitate ultimate liberation of the spirit.

Part two is titled 'Methods of Ayurvedic Treatment' and is an elaborate enunciation of the Ayurvedic therapeutic module, which follows its unique and rational approach to health. The eight chapters in this part cover various stages of Ayurvedic treatment—herbal medicines, appraisal of the disease processes, diagnoses, methods of treatment, and clinical procedures. A chapter 'Yoga and Ayurveda' highlights the nexus between the two disciplines, showing how both of them benefit by a mutual process of cross-fertilization.

Ayurveda: Nature's Medicine is an extraordinary treatise with tremendous appeal. The book is Janus-faced, in the sense that it is a valuable textbook, tailored to the needs of serious students of Ayurveda; it is also a general treatise educating eager readers on the dynamics of Ayurveda. Each page of the book bears the stamp of the renowned authors' massive scholarship and masterly expository skills. The book is an asset for earnest students and a boon for the general public seeking an authentic exposition of the principles and practices of Ayurveda.

N Hariharan
Madurai

REPORTS



Music performance at the Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, Chicago

Commemoration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda

The following centres organized various programmes to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. **Agartala:** A state-level youth convention from 19 to 21 October 2013, in which 964 delegates participated. **Bagda:** Value education and personality development workshops at 5 schools in **Purulia** district from July to September, in which 956 students took part. **Chengalpattu:** Processions, devotional music, and film shows on Swamiji at 13 places from 19 September to 4 October. **Chennai Math:** A three-day youth camp from 5 to 7 July, in which more than 200 youths took part. A special programme at the centre's Girls' Higher Secondary School, Mint, on 19 July. A special camp on 15 August, attended by 350 village girls trained by Chennai Math under its nursing assistant training programme. A three-day symposium on 'Man-making Message of Swami Vivekananda' at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras, in association with the Vivekananda Study Circle of the IIT, from 19 to 21 August, attended by a large number of students and faculty members. **Cherrapunji:** A workshop on value education on 27 September, in which 62 teachers from 41 schools participated. **Chicago (USA):** 5 special lectures at the centre and 7 talks at different places in and around Chicago from 1 September to 20 October. A music programme on 24 September, attended by about 40 people. A

three-day spiritual retreat at Ganges retreat from 27 to 29 September, in which 90 devotees took part. In collaboration with the University of Chicago, the centre organized a special programme comprising lectures and music performance on 6 October at the Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, Chicago, attended by about 700 people. **Coimbatore Mission:** Youth camps at 5 colleges on 17, 20, 24, and 27 September and 1 October, in which 5,000 National Service Scheme students took part. **Delhi:** A classical music concert on 6 October, attended by about 350 people. A state-level youth convention from 18 to 20 October, in which 1,144 youths participated. **Dinajpur (Bangladesh):** 9 spiritual retreats from March to September, in which 2,000 devotees participated. A special programme, comprising procession, lectures, and cultural events, at Nilphamari town on 27 September, attended by about 1,000 people. **Gadadhar Ashrama, Kolkata:** 4 special lectures at different schools in the month of September, attended by about 1,000 students and teachers. **Geneva (Switzerland):** Swami Vivekananda had spent nearly two weeks in Saas-Fee, Switzerland, in 1896. He had stayed at the Grand Hotel Saas-Fee, now renamed Best Western Metropal Grand Hotel Saas-Fee. At the initiative of the Geneva centre a plaque with a write-up in German, French, and English was unveiled at the hotel on 30 August. Following this event,

a bust of Swamiji was unveiled in front of the Saaser Museum in Saas-Fee and a meeting was held at the Community Hall. A musical soir  e and speeches at a hotel in Geneva on 31 August. A programme comprising lectures and music at Rietberg Museum, Zurich, on 1 September. **Gretz (France):** A special programme on a boat sailing on the River Seine, comprising meditation, a talk by the Swami Suhitananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, and music, on 28 September; about 150 people attended the programme. Swami Suhitananda consecrated Swamiji's statue in the centre's shrine on 29 September. On the centre's initiative, the UNESCO organized a special programme at its headquarters in Paris on 7 October, jointly with the Embassy of India and the Permanent Delegation of India to the UNESCO. The Director General of the UNESCO, Indian Ambassador to France, and several other dignitaries gave speeches on the theme 'The Universal Message of Swami Vivekananda'. Besides, a panel discussion was held in which distinguished people from different walks of life took part. **Hyderabad:** Youth conventions on 30 September and 9 October. **Japan:** In collaboration with the Embassy of India, Tokyo, the centre organized an exhibition on the themes 'Indo-Japan relationship' and 'Swami Vivekananda and Okakura Tenshin' on 28 and 29 September at the annual Namaste India Festival in Tokyo. The exhibition was inaugurated by a former Prime Minister of Japan and was visited by many dignitaries besides 2,000 people. **Kochi:** Youth conventions on 5 October at Tripunithura and on 9 October at the centre premises. **Palai:** Cultural competitions on 6 October for students. **Ponnampet:** A three-day spiritual retreat from 18 to 20 October and three value education workshops for teachers in Kodagu district in September. **Purulia:** Value education workshops for professionals and

parents from May to October. **Raipur:** A youth convention on 15 September at a high school in a remote village of Durg district, in which 500 students took part. **Ramharipur:** The centre started 150 Vivekananda Study Circles in Bankura district. **Saradapitha, Belur:** A long walk from Belur Math to Kamarpukur on 4 October. **Salem:** A regional seminar on 26 October at a polytechnic college in Salem, attended by 1,100 people. **Silchar:** 3 conventions for students in October, in which 1,448 students and 80 teachers took part. A devotees' convention on 6 October, attended by about 600 devotees. **Swamiji's Ancestral House, Kolkata:** 8 public meetings, a national seminar, and a youth convention from 22 September to 20 October. **Varanasi Home of Service:** Programmes for youths at 26 educational institutions in 6 districts of Uttar Pradesh from 1 to 9 September. In all, 11,668 students took part in the programmes. **Vrindaban:** A cycle rally on 25 September and a long run (2 kms) on 2 October, in which respectively 60 and 750 students took part. A district-level youth convention on 9 October, in which about 200 college and university students and lecturers participated.

Durga Puja

Durga Puja, in image, was celebrated at the following 24 centres: Antpur, Asansol, Barasat, Contai, Cooch Behar, Dhaleswar (under Agartala), Ghatshila, Guwahati, Jalpaiguri, Jamshedpur, Jayrambati, Kamarpukur, Karimganj, Lucknow, Malda, Medinipur, Mumbai, Patna, Port Blair, Rahara, Shella (under Cherrapunji), Shillong, Silchar, and Varanasi Advaita Ashrama. Outside India Durga Puja was also performed in image at Mauritius ashrama and the following 11 centres in Bangladesh: Baliati, Barisal, Chittagong, Comilla, Dhaka, Dinajpur, Faridpur, Habiganj, Jessore, Narayanganj, and Sylhet. At Dhaka centre Ms Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister

of Bangladesh, and several other distinguished persons attended the Durga Puja celebration. On Ashtami Day nearly 13,000 people witnessed the Kumari Puja and about 12,000 people were served cooked Prasad.

News from Branch Centres

The newly constructed building at **Ramakrishna Mission, Sikra-Kulingram**, to be used as dispensary, vocational training centre, and coaching centre was inaugurated on 4 October.

Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, laid the foundation stone for the proposed Swami Vivekananda Diagnostic and Cardiac Care Centre at **Ramakrishna Mission, Seva Pratishthan**, on 8 October.

Swami Gautamananda inaugurated the newly built teachers' quarters at **Ramakrishna Math, Kadapa**, on 29 October.

Relief

Cyclone Relief • In the wake of the devastating cyclone Phailin, which struck the eastern coast of India in mid-October, **Kothar** centre served cooked food (rice and *dalma*) to 979 persons at 6 villages of Baripada in Kuliana block of Mayurbhanj district from 17 to 21 October and distributed 200 mats and an equal number of mosquito nets, bed sheets, towels, saris, lungis, women's garments, T-shirts, torches, and utensil-sets (each set containing a *handi*, a *karahi*, a plate, a tumbler, a ladle, a *khunti*, and a *lota*) among 200 families of those villages on 23 October. **Puri Mission** centre distributed 500 dhotis, 844 lungis, 1,344 saris, and an equal number of bed sheets, towels, mats, umbrellas, and utensil-sets (each set containing a *handi*, a *dekchi*, a *karahi*, a ladle, a mug, a plate, 3 bowls, 2 tumblers, and a bucket) among 1,344 families of 4 villages in Puri and Ganjam districts from 16 to 31 October. Besides, **Bhubaneshwar** centre is conducting primary relief work in Baleswar and Ganjam districts, and **Puri Math** centre in Puri district. Further reports are awaited. The cyclonic

depression also caused heavy rainfall, storms, and inundation in some districts of West Bengal. Consequently **Antpur** centre served cooked food (*kh-ichri*) to 20,610 affected people and distributed 23,050 kg chira and 2,300 kg sugar among 15,743 families of Udaynarayanpur block in Howrah district and Jangipara block in Hooghly district from 15 to 22 October. **Tamluk** centre distributed 50,250 kg chira, 5,100 kg sugar, 8,500 packets of biscuits and 400,000 halogen tablets among 12,373 affected families of 47 villages in Purba Medinipur district from 18 to 29 October.

Distress Relief • The following centres distributed various items to needy people: **Antpur**: 505 saris and 157 dhotis on 9 October; **Bagh-bazar**: 125 saris through Sargachhi ashrama, 120 saris through Manasadwip ashrama, and 119 saris through Chandipur Math; **Baranagar Math**: 518 saris, 32 dhotis, and 243 children's garments on 4 October. **Dinajpur** (Bangladesh): 205 kg wheat flour, an equal amount of semolina, sugar, and edible oil among 205 families, and 700 saris among needy women in the month of October. **Garbeta**: 73 saris, 55 dhotis, 41 lungis, 80 shirts, 21 pants, 45 frocks, 10 churidars, 36 vests, and 195 children's garments among 556 needy people from 3 to 21 October. **Habiganj** (Bangladesh): 90 saris on 10 October. **Jalpaiguri**: 350 saris on 6 October. **Karimganj**: 300 saris on 9 October. **Silchar**: 3,122 saris and 1694 dhotis from 19 September to 8 October. **Vrindaban**: 800 kg rice, 800 kg wheat flour, 200 kg dal, 200 kg mustard oil, 400 kg salt, and 100 kg sugar among 400 old widows on 4 October.

Flood Relief • **Vadodara** centre distributed 1,500 bags of raw food items (each bag containing 7.5 kg rice, 2.5 kg dal, 1 kg salt, 100 gm chilli powder, 100 gm turmeric powder, 100 gm mustard seeds, 1 l edible oil, 1 kg potatoes, 1 kg onions, and 250 gm garlic) among 1,500 flood-affected families of 15 villages in Vadodara district from 2 to 5 October.

Rehabilitation Relief • **Purulia** centre excavated a large lake, named 'Vivekananda Sarovar', in Arsha block of Purulia district, with financial support from the Government of West Bengal. It was inaugurated on 2 October.





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